

What Went Wrong With Voter Registration?

STEFAN KANFER • SHAUL BAKHASH • ANN HULBERT • WILLIAM PRITCHARD • RICHARD STROUT

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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TOUCHY GREELEY

To the editors:

Joseph Nocera's piece ("Greeley's Grail," *TNR*, December 17) was a personal assault on my brother, Andrew Greeley, not a review. Nocera ignores my co-authorship of the book save in a passing reference; throughout the article he says "Greeley wrote" about sentences I wrote. Since we stated that Greeley wrote specific chapters and I wrote others, it should have been obvious that the chapters on sexuality, women, intimacy, parish, and liturgy—the chapters that Nocera quotes in heaping his invective on Greeley—were written by me. Does Nocera assume that female co-authors just make the coffee?

Nocera also ignores the paradigm of the Catholic sensibility and only refers to part two, where we suggest ways in which the Catholic sensibility might enrich those policy concerns that are of interest to the majority of American Catholics. Contrary to his statement, we do address the birth control question, arguing that the natural law tradition has always emphasized "nature" more than "law." We go on to observe that the empirical sciences' present knowledge of the "nature" of human sexuality indicates that what is primarily human in sexuality is there for creating the bond of mutual love. Thus, it does not seem to follow—at least from the natural law tradition—that every single act of sexual intercourse must be open to the possibility of procreation.

Nocera, like a horny adolescent racing through a book—even the Bible—for references to S-E-X, yanks out of context a few passages that deal with that subject and uses them against Greeley. Yet each of these "juicy" bits was composed by me. Nocera also mocks Greeley's support of neighborhood parishes. At the same time he ignores the point (that I make) that successful urban parishes offer a model for people who recognize the importance of organic, local community for the Catholic sensibility.

Nocera wrongly implies that Greeley calls the bishops buffoons, mistakenly claims that he refers to social activists as "screaming crazies," and says that Greeley hopes the book offends all ideologues while ignoring the next sentence: "And something, we hope and

pray, to excite all nonideologues."

Nocera's article is simply a rehash of the obsessive attitude that afflicts many reviewers. His disregard for my co-authorship of the book makes it obvious that he is a Greeley hater and a chauvinist.

MARY G. DURKIN
Park Ridge, Illinois

THE GREEKS SPEAK

To the editors:

Your complaint that Prime Minister Papandreou is a "hypocrite" and talks "like a candidate for admission to the Warsaw Pact," (*"Squeaky Greek at the Wheel,"* *TNR*, February 4) reveals an unfortunate misunderstanding of Greece's foreign policy. We believe that to pursue the goals of world peace, dialogue, and arms control and to promote the special national interests of Greece is in no way inconsistent with shared democratic principles and ideals, even when those considerations compel differences with the present U.S. administration on specific issues. Greece has many reasons to feel—over the Cyprus

issue and allied complacency over Turkey's expansionist behavior in the Aegean—that the alliance has not encouraged Greece's enthusiasm. We, nevertheless, have—as your editorial admits up to a point—acted with restraint and moderation with regard to our relations with the United States and NATO.

ACHILLES PAPARSENOS

Press Attaché
Embassy of Greece
Washington, D.C.

EPIPHENOMENA

To the editors:

From the January 28 issue: "We none of us can choose our moments of epiphany" (*"Curse of the Giant Muffins,"* *TRB*); "Mailer had a dark epiphany" (*"Punch-Drunk Writers,"* by David Remnick); "Last week there occurred in my office a sociological epiphany" (*"Washington Diarist,"* by L.W.). Perhaps *TRB* was wrong? Or is *TNR* just being fashionably late?

MARTIN A. SÖVIK
Washington, D.C.

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FROM WASHINGTON

ABORTION TIME BOMB

One of the worst things that ever happened to American liberalism was *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court case announcing a constitutional right to an abortion. Almost overnight, it politicized millions of people and helped create a mass movement of social-issue conservatives that has grown into one of the most potent forces in our democracy. Although it was written by a Nixon appointee, Harry Blackmun, and supported by two others, including Chief Justice Warren Burger, *Roe* became a symbol of "liberal" judicial excess and cast a retrospective shadow of illegitimacy on all the important cases of the Warren era.

Roe declared that the constitutional right to privacy "is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." After the first "trimester" of pregnancy, the court said, states may regulate abortion for the purpose of protecting the mother's health. After the second trimester, states may take a legitimate interest in the "potential life" of the fetus, and "may go so far as to proscribe abortion . . . except when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother."

The reasoning in *Roe* was, in a word, a mess. There was almost no effort to explain where this "right" to an abortion came from. Previous "privacy" rulings had involved protecting the exercise of political freedom or controlling the police, both matters that feature prominently in the Bill of Rights. Abortion doesn't. As for those trimesters, the court reasoned that abortion during the first trimester is safer for the mother than normal childbirth, whereas the beginning of the third trimester is when "the fetus becomes 'viable' . . . outside

the mother's womb. . . ." But why should the fact that abortion is safer than childbirth mean the state can't regulate abortion to make it safer still? Why is "viability" the magic point at which the fetus's potential life becomes a legitimate concern? Why, even at that point, should this potential life be held constitutionally less important than a woman's "health," defined in a companion case to include "all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial. . . ." The court never said.

The *Roe* opinion placed great weight on giving doctors the freedom to exercise their best medical judgment. But most abortion decisions are for personal reasons, and don't depend on doctors' expertise. On the other hand, Blackmun's biggest concession was authorizing state interference to protect the mother, which is odd since the issue is the mother's own right to be free of state interference. This aspect of *Roe* has become an invitation to hypocrisy. States keep trying to make abortion more difficult, ostensibly to protect the health of the mother, and the court keeps playing doctor and saying these measures aren't really necessary.

In subsequent cases, the court has made it next to impossible for states to exercise their ostensible right to protect the fetus after "viability." In 1976, it ruled against specific definitions of viability in terms of gestation time or fetal weight. Then in 1979, it ruled that a statute simply defining viability as "the capability . . . to live outside the mother's womb albeit with artificial aid"—words lifted almost directly from *Roe*—was "void for vagueness" (one of my all-time favorite legal expressions).

But there is a time bomb ticking away inside *Roe v. Wade*. Scientific developments of the past decade, allowing us to peer into the womb, have affected the emotional climate and a lot of people's thinking about abortion. Less widely noted outside legal circles is how other medical developments have started to undermine abortion's legal basis.

Justice Blackmun wrote in 1973, "Viability is usually placed at about seven months (28 weeks). . . ." He conceded that it "may occur earlier, even at 24 weeks," but went on to declare 28 weeks—the beginning of the third trimester—as the definite cutoff. He later defined viability as "a reasonable likelihood" of survivability outside the womb, "with or without artificial sup-

port." Who knows what "a reasonable likelihood" means, but according to Dr. Michael Epstein, a neonatologist at Harvard Medical School: "If you go back ten years, the babies with a 50-50 chance were about 30 weeks. Now that's down to 26 or 27 weeks." A study cited by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in a 1983 abortion case reported a 20-percent chance of survival for infants born at 25 weeks. Babies born as early as 21 to 22 weeks have been known to survive. Dr. Epstein feels that 24 weeks may be the lower limit of regular survivability, but others are more optimistic. Meanwhile, of course, "test-tube baby" experimenters are burrowing in from the other side. It's not wild to suppose that the two medical expeditions will meet in the middle some day.

Five of the seven justices who concurred in *Roe* 12 years ago are still on the court. The future of abortion may depend on whether developments in gerontology can outpace developments in neonatology. But the present Supreme Court cannot remain intact forever. Already there is one new justice who has made plain her opposition to *Roe*. Add the two who voted against it originally and a chief justice who seems eager to undermine it, and that's four. Five is a majority.

Supreme Court justices are deeply reluctant to overturn decisions of their predecessors, even decisions they disagree with. (That's because if their predecessors were wrong about something, why, even they themselves might . . . no, no, it doesn't bear thinking about.) But advances in medical technology might give a future court just the opportunity it needs to repeal the result of *Roe v. Wade* without brazenly rejecting its logic.

The court already has cited medical advances to undermine its own "trimester" analysis. In 1973, "whether [abortion] must be in a hospital" was offered as a specific example of something the state could regulate after the first trimester. In 1983, noting that "the safety of second-trimester abortions has increased dramatically," the court rejected such a regulation. As O'Connor pointed out in a dissent, improvements in abortion safety are pushing forward the court's "maternal health" dividing line at the same time as developments in the care of premature babies are pushing back its "viability" dividing line. "The *Roe* framework . . . is clearly

continued on page 42



THE NEW REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 25, 1985

HEROIN AND COWARDICE

One by one, a dozen or so U.S. representatives approached their colleague from California, Henry Waxman, last fall and told him why they had voted down his bill to allow doctors to use heroin for terminal cancer pain. It wasn't because they questioned the drug's effectiveness as a painkiller. Nor did they fear that the small quantity involved would somehow wind up on the street, as some critics of the bill had charged. Their opposition was based on fear. "They explained to me," Waxman says, "that with the November election coming up, a vote for the bill would allow their opponents to brand them 'heroin pushers.'" The bill lost by an overwhelming 355 to 55 votes, but Waxman and Senate sponsor Daniel Inouye are going to try again this session.

This is a small matter, but it's indicative of the state of our politics. According to several political consultants, the representatives were right to be wary of supporting the heroin bill. "Campaigns in recent years have gotten strikingly negative," says Geoffrey Garin, president of Peter Hart and Associates, a leading political consulting firm. Garin says he would have to advise an incumbent to be cautious about supporting the heroin bill. He cites the example of Lloyd Doggett, who lost a bid for the Senate last year to Phil Gramm in Texas. Doggett endorsed legislation to prevent discrimination against gays in hiring. Gramm then ran ads claiming Doggett wanted preferential treatment for homosexuals.

If a challenger runs an ad saying, "My opponent has voted to legalize heroin," the incumbent has to respond, putting her on the defensive and forcing her to squander money on a tangential issue she did not even want to discuss. Moreover, the reply may not reach the same segment of voters who saw the challenger's ad. If a member of

Congress makes all these calculations before voting for a bill—and, inevitably, she will—support in principle becomes opposition in practice.

The Compassionate Pain Relief Act, as the reintroduced bill is rather ponderously known, addresses the suffering of about 8,000 terminal cancer patients every year who do not respond to available painkillers such as morphine. Heroin is employed as a painkiller in at least 40 countries. English specialists have found heroin to be more potent than morphine and less likely to induce side effects such as nausea and drowsiness. Many cancer patients cannot stomach oral medication and must receive injections instead. Heroin is much more soluble than morphine; it can be injected in smaller, and hence less painful, doses. Heroin would be used only on terminally ill patients, for whom addiction is not an issue. And in England, those who do recover seem to lose their desire for the drug when the pain abates.

Opponents of the bill are touting another drug called Dilaudid, just now becoming available in injectable form. The government has spent more than a million dollars over the past few years on Dilaudid, with the express purpose of finding an alternative to heroin. Studies comparing oral heroin and oral Dilaudid show heroin to be more potent, with fewer side effects. A study has now started comparing injectable forms of these drugs, but the results are several years away. Meanwhile, thousands will die in agony if the law isn't changed.

Under the Pain Relief Act, heroin would be authorized for a four-year trial period while the Dilaudid study continues. The threat of criminal diversion is minimal. Heroin would be available solely in hospital pharmacies, where only about two percent of drug thefts occur. Even

if *all* the heroin to be used for pain management wound up on the streets, it would total just three percent of what is already there. Sixty percent of the drug overdoses in the United States are caused by prescription drugs diverted into the illicit market. Yet no one is talking about banning those products. Even Dilaudid, heroin opponents' drug of choice, sells for about \$40 per tablet on the street. Addicts say it produces a "high" comparable to heroin.

The representatives who voted against the Pain Relief Act last fall don't have an election to worry about this spring. What's more, the revised bill positively overflows with reassurances that legalizing heroin for cancer patients is sound medical practice and in no way will contribute to the addiction problem on the streets. But Waxman and Inouye had better get their legislation to the floor for a vote. The 1986 campaign is about to begin.

LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

After eight years, Morton Kondracke is leaving his position as executive editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC. He has taken an arguably more important and unarguably more lucrative job as the Washington bureau chief of *Newsweek*. My own debt to Mort is enormous. We grew separately together, and I learned from his calm professionalism the disciplines of restraint. Mort has a writing style so vivid and clear—and so without verbal gimmickry—that he is the envy of the trade. But there is no clarity of style without clarity of mind; and Mort's mind moves almost intuitively to the core of political matters. Yet nothing of his you've ever read here was produced without scrupulous research and investigation, in the tradition of his predecessor on the "White House Watch," the late John Osborne. Mort also has a sure knack for grasping what Americans are thinking and, disagree though he might with what at any particular moment that happens to be, he has a healthy respect for their thought. He was a dream to work with. I've known no one so talented who was so unassuming. I envy his new colleagues at *Newsweek* and also their readers.

M.P.

ROBERT FITZGERALD, 1911-1985

Robert Stuart Fitzgerald, who died January 16, was guest poetry editor of this magazine from 1975 to 1978. He was a poet, and a critic, and Harvard's Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. But these distinctions only embellished the poetic achievement that made him famous: the most beautiful translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

that have been produced in this century. In Fitzgerald's hands, translation was no apologetic servant to poetry, but a profound connection with the past. A Homer who could launch an English version of his *Odyssey* with the translator's quintessential invocation—"Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the tale"—was a living voice near enough to love.

Fitzgerald did not confine his skills to Homer. In early years he collaborated with Dudley Fitts on some widely used translations of the plays of Sophocles, and in his short retirement he completed a new and elegant rendering of Virgil's *Aeneid*. But his relation to Homer had elements of something rarer—a sense of real identification, a touch of the old bard himself. As close as his poetry made readers feel to the Greek poet, Fitzgerald's actual presence brought them closer yet.

My time in that presence was brief, but I mourn the magic sense of connectedness as much as I do the man. In class what he mainly did—what he made clear he loved doing—was read the works aloud. Every Tuesday afternoon he'd start by saying to us, "Listen to this, now . . . it was meant to be listened to." And off he'd go in that lilting, almost metered voice. The 12 of us would listen, very quiet around the blond wood table, our jittery freshman muscles gradually unclenching—relaxed, lulled.

That was at Harvard in spring 1981, a seminar on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in translation, the last class he taught. We were new at the game, impressed to distraction by his gold cigarette case and black beret, by the sherry and crackers he never forgot to serve midway through class, by the soft, affectionate way he referred to his texts: "You know, last night I was just going through Book One again, and I noticed as never before the amount of fog and mist that goes drifting through those lines." Or by the way he could elicit from us the sharper details of Homer's action, of Athena's first descent to Akhilleus: "She grabs him by the *hair*, for God's sake! Can't you just see it?"—both fists hitting the table.

He'd assign written work—usually just "a finely crafted page, please"—then read it aloud too, attentive and complimentary. The occasional sentence made him pause and tilt his head: "You know, that's rather well put." (One such encomium could warm an entire spring.) And then, as six o'clock drew near: "Now, listen. . . ." And we'd listen, lulled again, before heading for dinner and the world.

Last spring, three years later, he came back to Harvard to give a lecture. Retirement had produced his *Aeneid*, glowingly received. Turnout was heavy for the talk, which was billed as a comparison of the Homeric and the Virgilian narrators, standard fare, co-sponsored by the departments of classics and comp lit. He looked thin and frail. At first he discoursed in fairly conventional manner upon Odysseus, his lies and truth; Odysseus the special liar, the trickster we somehow trust, so much so that when he begins telling us the most outrageous lies in all of Western literature, we swallow them whole. He talked for a while about Odysseus and the *Odyssey* and then, just about

when you'd have expected him to branch off into orderly academic compare-and-contrast, he picked up his *Aeneid* from the tabletop, opened it, turned a leaf. Then smiled out at his scholarly audience of 300. "And now I think I'll read a little," he said. "Don't get upset . . . it'll only be for a little while. . . ."

No one looked upset. He took a sip from a can of Coke and found the place in the *Aeneid*. Then he read, and he read, and he read.

AMY E. SCHWARTZ

NOTEBOOK

□ WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY:



POLITICAL DIVISION MEETING. Political Director Ann Lewis meets with Barbara Hansberry and Phil Culkins, who coordinate outreach to Asian Pacific Democrats and to "differently-abled" Americans.

(From the January/February issue of *Democrats Today*, published by the Democratic National Committee.)

□ ONE PICTURE IS WORTH, well, a lot more than a thousand words. On January 30, the front page of *The New York Times* carried a photograph of Tom Korologos, one of the nation's most successful political operators, in the classic Washington pose of whispering advice to someone testifying in front of a congressional committee. The someone in this case was Edwin Meese, during the Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings on his nomination for attorney general. Korologos, who describes himself as "the leading expert on how to get confirmed," is associated with the Republican lobbying firm of Timmons & Co. Oh no, we thought. Don't tell us that Meese is going to submit a lobbyist's bill to the taxpayers just like the \$700,000 lawyers' bill he's already submitted! But Korologos says he helped Meese out as a personal favor (hmmmm . . .) and "for the good of the country." And once the investigative fevers had passed, we realized that—just like Poe's purloined letter—Korologos's payoff was hidden in plain sight, right there on the front page of the *Times*. What could be better for a professional influence peddler than a front-page demonstration not only that he has a confidential relationship with the attorney general, but also that the attorney general owes him one?

□ IN A SINGLE burst of indignant rhetoric, Senator Joe Biden made himself the media hero of the Meese confirmation hearings. On Wednesday, January 30, he demanded of Meese: "Why do you stick to the technicalities of saying, for example, in the meeting where McKean's name came up, 'It was not a formal meeting'? Who the hell cares whether it was a formal meeting?" This was considered both sharp questioning and fine political theater by *The Washington Post*, which devoted two-thirds of its Op-Ed page to the text of Biden's outburst and Meese's reply. The text really shows that Biden can barely form a coherent sentence. His outburst was full of smarmy stuff about how he had agonized over the Meese appointment. "Why, why do I find it so difficult to vote for you?" And so on. The next day, Biden went into even more absurd arm-waving. He said he wasn't concerned that Meese wasn't ethical or honorable, only that he wasn't "sensitive" to ethical concerns. What does that mean? This showboating was rightly ridiculed by Meese's supporters, and distracted attention from the substantial case against Meese being made by Howard Metzenbaum. *Post* readers didn't find out until Sunday, in an article by Robert Kaiser, that (under questioning from Metzenbaum) Meese said that he changed White House records to show that he received \$10,000 from the Presidential Transition Trust for "consulting fees," even though he had long since cashed the check when it was marked "moving expenses." Meese had told the independent counsel that he couldn't recall specifically why he'd had the records changed. In his Senate testimony, he admitted that he changed the records because he learned it would be illegal to accept moving expenses.

□ AND STUPES? A *Washington Post* report on one of the many parties surrounding last month's inaugural quoted James Watt as saying that he had never heard of the Holocaust until he became secretary of the interior. Meanwhile Washington's NBC affiliate, WRC-TV, took out a page in the *Post*'s Sunday TV supplement on February 3 to plug a film called "Hitler's SS," followed by the news, followed by a basketball show. "What a Night," said the ad, "Troops, Scoops, and Hoops."

□ LAST YEAR'S TAX BILL closed an obscure but costly loophole for the real estate industry. It involves deals where the seller of a property lends the buyer part of the purchase price. Watch carefully. If Seller charges Buyer an abnormally low interest rate on the loan, and makes up the difference by raising the purchase price of the property, they're both better off. Seller has converted interest income, which is fully taxable, into capital gain, which is three-fifths deductible. Buyer, at no additional out-of-pocket cost, has increased the "basis" on which he can take the enormous depreciation write-offs created by the 1981 tax bill. Last year's bill made this trick much more difficult, in ways too complicated to get into. Now, *The Wall Street Journal* reports, the real estate industry—when it isn't screaming for lower federal deficits—is screaming

to get the loophole reopened. It already has gotten Congress to give it a six-month reprieve, which expires July 1. This minor yet infuriating episode is a good example of why loophole closing is no substitute for comprehensive tax reform. By wiping out pointless complexities such as special treatment for capital gains and accelerated depreciation, tax reform would eliminate not just current loopholes but also the building blocks lawyers and accountants use to build the loopholes of tomorrow. That helps explain another *Wall Street Journal* report that the threat of tax reform has turned into the biggest boon ever for Washington's lobbying industry.

□ TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "*Krapp's Last Tape* is Samuel Beckett's latest, and possibly very best, dramatic poem about the old age of the world. Still obsessed with the alienation, vacuity, and decay of life upon a planet devoid of God and hope, Beckett is finally able to sound those chords of compassion which have always vibrated quietly in his other work. Yet, what really strikes me as new is the extraordinary economy of the writing, the absolute flawlessness of the form. *Godot* and *Endgame*, for all their great poetry and insight, were ultimately marred, I think, by their length. It is one thing to affirm that life is a string of aimless, incosequential, and monotonous events; it is quite another to produce and reproduce these events upon the stage. Although Beckett's art, like Ionesco's, lends itself most readily to short statements, the burden of his plays—that one day is very much like another—has led him into labyrinths of *longueur* and repetition." ("Krapp and a Little Claptrap," by Robert Brustein, February 22, 1960.)

POSTCARD LOS ANGELES

NEOLIBERALS KEEP OUT

MOVING FROM Washington back home has been tough on this neoliberal. I was prepared for some coarsening of my views once I stopped living in a place where all political passion is considered a bit unrefined and began living in a place that I really cared about. But I wasn't prepared to discover I had become a complete reactionary.

Yet there I was, moping in my beer, because Barney's Beanery (a famous old hangout on Santa Monica Boulevard) was forced to stop distributing matchbooks bearing its ancient motto, "Fagots Stay Out," and to take down a similarly misspelled sign tacked over the bar. The restaurant had since been sold and did not actually exclude homosexuals. The matchbooks and sign were kept as part of the place's heritage.

But Barney's had the misfortune of being located in West Hollywood, a sliver of miscellaneous L.A. County

land incorporated last November after a petition drive by gay and tenant activists. About a third of the area's residents are gay, and three of five members of the new city council are openly homosexual. Their first official acts were to roll back rents and to ban antihomosexual discrimination. (As James Wolcott once said of the politics of *The Village Voice*, "We're for fistfucking and against gentrification.") Attorneys for the city threatened to turn over the Barney's matchbooks to the D.A.'s office. After a brief period of pleading the First Amendment, Barney's owner caved in. The city's mayor (yes, one of the three) removed the offending sign from above the bar in a brief ceremony on Martin Luther King's birthday.

Civil rights march on. So why did I find myself sympathizing with Barney's? Was it that the slogan was unenforced? Partly. I certainly don't sympathize with the Jonathan Club, an oceanfront resort in Santa Monica that seems to actually exclude blacks, women, Jews, and Hispanics. But I'd be offended if the matchbooks said "Niggers Stay Out," even if the policy was unenforced. I guess I have two arguments. First, while homosexuals certainly have a history of oppression, it seems clear that, at least in West Los Angeles, they are no longer the oppressed group. They've won, politically and, more important, economically, in a way that blacks haven't. There is something inflated, and unnecessarily defensive, in the gay politicians' righteous invocation of the elaborate and (necessarily) humorless mechanisms of racial equality.

Second, the Barney's sign wasn't really designed to keep out homosexuals so much as to keep out the homosexual life-style, which has taken over virtually every other bar in the area (except one called *The Raincheck Room*, which responded to the Barney's Crisis with a mysterious sign warning "Farraguts Stay Out"). The difference seems important. Sexuality may not be a matter of choice for many people, but "life-style" is. And some discrimination on the basis of life-style is, I think, both unavoidable and ultimately healthy. What the Barney's sign implied was that, no matter what your sexual preference, you were expected to act a certain way inside. You were supposed to feel uncomfortable if you didn't. I am made to feel uncomfortable in most gay bars, if they don't stop me right at the door. So what? One of the ways the gay life-style is defined is by excluding "breeders" like me. Should I be able to sue if I can't get in to Studio 54 because the doorman thinks I look like a nerd?

Toleration, Robert Paul Wolff points out in his book *The Poverty of Liberalism*, is itself a choice to have one particular kind of society and to repress the intolerant. But the society I'd rather live in is one that, at some appropriately trivial level (bars, clothing, manners), tolerates the intolerant. The sanitizers of Barney's seem to be heading toward a bland Yuppie culture in which all bars are open to everyone, but are all more or less the same.

A SECOND bit of significant local restaurant news was the demolition of Ship's in Westwood Village near UCLA. Ship's was perhaps the best remaining example of

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one of L.A.'s major cultural contributions, the fifties-modern coffee shop. It was a beautiful boomerang of a place, with orange booths and huge glass windows overlooking the traditional (for L.A.) yucca plants and parking places. It was also one of those precious institutions where the ideal of tolerance works, where people of all ages, economic classes, and degrees of sanity could sit side by side and get a decent full-course meal for five bucks. I would take out-of-towners there, and after eating we could walk across the street, where in an alley there is a concrete block retaining wall that, viewed from the other side, turns out to contain the remains of Marilyn Monroe.

The land on which Ship's sat will be used for a high-rise office building. L.A. lawyers see no reason to commute downtown when they live in the suburbs, so large tacky buildings (including one built by the firm of outgoing Democratic National Committee Chairman Charles Manatt) are springing up all over Los Angeles's Westside, formerly a pleasant hodgepodge of homes and low-rise business strips. In new West Hollywood, prominent Democratic fund-raiser and gay leader Sheldon Andelson, has similar plans. Andelson owns Trump's (a trendy restaurant where you cannot get a decent meal for five bucks), and much of the rest of the neighborhood. "I like a lot of development," Andelson recently told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I like tall buildings. I like the power and the action and the vibrancy that they mean to me."

Whatever gets you through the night. Unfortunately, the new office towers threaten to choke the area's road and freeway system. An unbelievably expensive subway, called Metro Rail, is supposed to solve the problem. Metro Rail is a pet project of Mayor Tom Bradley and the construction unions who lust after all the \$22-an-hour jobs that make it so unbelievably expensive. But the federal funds required for Metro Rail appear to be a casualty of David Stockman's deficit-cutting efforts.

So I've also become a slow-growth reactionary, not a comfortable position for a neoliberal. Gentrification can't be stopped, I rationalize, but you should be able to control the size of the buildings the gentry inhabit. West L.A. has community plans, as required by state law, that limit development to a reasonable six stories or so. But the plans have yet to be translated into actual zoning laws. City councilpersons prefer to grant permits on a "case-by-case" basis, the better to extract campaign contributions from developers. They have perfected the art of making anti-high-rise noises while arriving a step too late to actually stop the buildings. Meanwhile, the threat of rezoning only fuels the building boom, which has persisted in the face of an office glut as aspiring real estate moguls seek to build while they still can. Many of the new buildings are largely empty. (Telethons aren't the only way Charles Manatt knows to lose money.)

AN UGLY new building of a different sort went up recently, not on the West Side, but downtown. Like so many other projects, this one was the product of

a conspiracy between Mayor Bradley and the construction unions. It is an emergency 138-bed shelter for homeless people, built by volunteer union craftsmen with materials donated by the AFL-CIO, whose local boss, William Robertson, dreamed up the idea. Thanks to some Bradley string-pulling, the normal laws of bureaucratic physics were suspended. Environmental impact went unstated. The idea was okayed on a Wednesday; actual hammering began on Saturday, and ten days later the first 40 homeless citizens moved into a completed 10,000-square-foot building. Some of the union volunteers worked all day after staying up all night on paying jobs. An electrician called it "one of the happiest days of my life, because I'm doing something for America." As a neoliberal, I am compelled to note that the government might be able to afford to build such shelters on a regular basis (and the Metro Rail too) if these same construction unions had not lobbied for a law requiring premium wages on all government projects. Still, this is one development it's hard to feel reactionary about. I won't complain if they put a sign, "Neoliberals Stay Out."

MICKY KAUS

Mickey Kaus, formerly a Washington writer, formerly a New York writer, is now a Los Angeles writer.

Literary flap of the season.

SOMETHING AMIS?

Dear Ann Candor:

I hear we Brits missed a bit of tedious twaddle from American wives recently. Lots of ladies sending letters in to their favourite columnist complaining about how a poke isn't their kind of party. Seventy-two percent of them (count them!) say they prefer cuddling from the lugs who share their beds. Sod it. I tell you what they're missing: Kingsley Amis's *Stanley and the Women*, which is selling nicely here in England, thank you. But the dodgy bags in the American publishing world are doing their best to keep *Stanley* from crossing the Atlantic. It's been out for nine months, and still no editor in the U.S. has bought it. Too misogynist, seems to be their complaint. I tell you, *Stanley* is right on the mark: "Women were like the Russians—if you did exactly what they wanted all the time you were being realistic and constructive and promoting the cause of peace, and if you ever stood up to them you were resorting to cold-war tactics and pursuing imperialistic designs and interfering in their internal affairs." Women in America are behaving especially like the Russians, censoring this book. Females are bloody well encouraged to be foul about

men in newspaper columns. Let's hear from Amis, and men in general, too. High time, I say.

Angry Not-So-Young Man in England

Dear Not-So:

You're not the only one complaining. Two fellow Englishmen, Christopher Hitchens in *The Times Literary Supplement* and John Gross in *The New York Times*, have also suggested that American publishers are caving in to feminist pressure not to publish *Stanley*. So has Jonathan Yardley in *The Washington Post*. I did a little calling around to try to clear things up. Several editors (men) say that in fact it's a different Russian problem. You see, Amis's previous novel, called *Russian Hide and Seek*, hasn't been published here either. (It's about Russians taking over Britain, not about women's war on men.) Apparently Amis's agent wants to sell the two as a package deal. So far editors just haven't bought it. Their reasons sound okay to me: Amis isn't a big seller over here, and the Russian book is supposed to be a snooze. As for *Stanley*, no one seems wild enough about it to take *Russian Hide and Seek* in the bargain. Come, come now—feminist censors? Look at all the sexist Mailer-ish stuff that gets sold. You sound a little tense. How about a visit to a counselor?

Dear Ann Candor:

I'm incensed by the insensitivity of that Angry Not-So. Would you kindly tell me why it is we are in such need of more Amis misogyny? We're not afraid of it. We're fed up with it. After all, we already had to put up with Amis's *Jake's Thing* (it surfaced here in 1979), all about a malfunctioning organ. It was limp all right. Your readers might like a little reminder of the enlightened views of Stanley's precursor, Jake, who shrewishly slanders women for "their concern . . . with seeming to be better and to be right while getting everything wrong, their automatic assumption of the role of injured party in any clash of wills, their certainty

that a view is the more credible and useful for the fact that they hold it, their use of misunderstanding and misrepresentation as weapons of debate, their selective sensitivity to tones of voice. . . ." I really can't go on. I know Amis will say I'm mistaking the tone of voice here, but I fail to find this funny. Nor is Stanley's version remotely amusing [Readers, no four-letter words, I'm afraid; this is a family column—Ann]: "In fact women only want one thing, for men to want to f--- them. If they do, it means they can f--- them up. Am I drunk? What I was trying to say, if you want to f--- a woman she can f--- you up. And if you don't want to she f---s you up anyway for not wanting to." Hah, hah.

Mad Woman in America



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Dear Mad:

My advice is lighten up. I called Mr. Amis himself. He said he thought the trouble was "not censorship, not a conspiracy, but it could be, without being paranoid, a powerful consensus." What bothered him most was that it seemed such "a humorless consensus." Now, I don't really think he's right even about a consensus (Amis's agent in England hints that publishers are bidding on the book right now). But I agree there isn't much sense of fun in this fuss. Maybe what you need is a little cuddling.

Dear Ann Candor:

Your correspondents have left out a few crucial things. Jake is a dry old stick. Stanley is "a cold fish and a bit of a sh--," as the reviewer in England's *Spectator* put it (if only our reviewers would write like that!). Sure, Stanley's ex-wife, his schizophrenic son's female psychotherapist, his new mother-in-law, and his new wife all look awful. But it's the men, Stanley and Jake, whose solitary, poor, nasty, brutish—and yes, occasionally sympathetic—souls we really get to know. Amis is none too flattering about them either. Or about Americans, for that matter. Or the psychiatric profession. Everyone's drying up into self-centered females and males, according to Amis. The shriveling makes for pretty dark comedy, and sometimes for rather clotted prose too. *Stanley and the Women* isn't a master-

piece, but it's not too "British" (though what does "dodgy" mean exactly, or "bint"?). And it's a lot better than lots of books that get into print. Let's drink to a bid on the book soon.

Latitudinarian Literary Lady

Dear L.L.L.:

I think you know the cure for what ails us (and so does Stanley: that cold fish sure does drink!). Never mind cud-dling, or counseling. Alcohol's the answer. I have an expert to back me up, Mr. Amis himself. As we hung up—it was almost five my time—his advice was, "Have a dry martini on me."

ANN HULBERT

Up from dictatorship.

URUGUAY'S SECOND ACT

Montevideo

AT 4:30 a.m. on election night in Uruguay last November, at the packed headquarters of the Colorado Party, a remarkable thing happened. As the just-elected candidate for president, Julio Sanguinetti, was delivering his victory speech to a huge throng, his opponent, the National Party's Alberto Zumaran, entered the hall. The crowd joyously began chanting, "Zumaran! Zumaran!" The two candidates embraced; Zumaran congratulated the man who had defeated him and pledged cooperation. Then everyone sang Uruguay's national anthem.

It was a powerful moment. Uruguay had just held the first national elections since its armed forces instituted one of the continent's most brutal regimes in 1973. And who had won mattered less than the fact that 11 years of military rule were ending with ballots, not bloodshed. The newly elected congress will be sworn in February 15, and Sanguinetti will be inaugurated on March 1.

In the months leading up to the election, Uruguay fervently celebrated the transition to democracy. This capital city, home to more than half of the country's three million people, became a carnival of posters, banners, sound trucks, parades, and honking cars festooned with flags. The final rallies of the three major parties drew more than 100,000 people each.

Before the military takeover, Uruguay had a history that was unusual for this region. It had been a constitutional democracy throughout the century, and it possessed an advanced social welfare system older than any in Europe. Add a large middle class and high literacy rates, and you had what political scientists and visiting reporters invariably called "the Switzerland of South America." But the idyll did not survive the drying up of overseas markets for

Uruguay's beef, wool, and wheat, and unsuccessful efforts to industrialize. Social turbulence, including the emergence in the late 1960s of the Movement for National Liberation (the "*Tupamaros*"), prompted the government to take increasingly repressive measures. In 1973 Uruguay suffered what Latin Americans call an *autogolpe*, a "self-coup," when its president dissolved the congress and handed control of the country to the military.

WITH THAT, Uruguay suffered the unaccustomed indignity of becoming one more South American military dictatorship. The generals suppressed political parties, censored the press, abolished free trade unions, and dismissed thousands of public employees from their jobs. By the mid-1970s, Uruguay had the highest number of political prisoners per capita in the world. One in 50 Uruguayans was interrogated. Torture of political prisoners and detainees became commonplace.

Most Uruguayans seem to agree that it was the military's inability to halt the country's economic decline that ultimately forced it to hand government back over to civilians. But they point to other factors as well: the absence of a single general personally determined to retain command and capable of dominating intramilitary squabbles (à la Chile's Pinochet); the military's lack of a tradition of intervention in national politics; and the generals' complete internal and international isolation. Uruguayans also credit the Carter administration's human rights policy.

President Carter's initiatives in Washington, particularly cutbacks in aid because of human rights violations, were complemented by the work of the embassy in Montevideo. The then U.S. ambassador, Lawrence Pezzullo, and his human rights officer, John Youle, forcefully pressed the Uruguayan military on human rights issues and developed strong contacts with the democratic opposition. The result was to establish the embassy as an effective advocate for human rights and democracy—a rare image for the United States in Latin America. Uruguayan political leaders, including Sanguinetti, believe Carter's policies helped push the military to agree to restore civilian rule.

In 1980 the armed forces held a plebiscite on a proposed constitution that would have given the military a dominant role in a new civilian government. The armed forces mounted a massive campaign and permitted little public opposition. The results astounded generals and civilians alike. Once in the secrecy of the polling booth, 58 percent of the voters rejected the new constitution—and, by extension, military rule.

The plebiscite marked the beginning of the end for military government. Over the next four years, amid spasms of violent repression and ever larger mass demonstrations against the regime, Uruguay's civilian leaders and the generals painfully negotiated the terms of the military's withdrawal from government.

The agreement formally reached last July, called the *Acuerdo del Club Naval* after the Navy club where the meetings took place, represented a substantial victory for the civilian negotiators. The accord's transitional provisions

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gave the military a face-saving way to bow out of government gracefully. For example, one provision gives the president authority to propose a state of siege during which liberties can be suspended and people accused of political crimes can be judged by military courts. But congress has the power to veto the proposed state of siege or repeal the law altogether. The military had opposed this qualification. Most important of all, the accord irrevocably commits the armed forces to elections and marks their withdrawal to the political sidelines.

Consistent with Uruguayan tradition, the voting on election day was free of fraud. The Colorado Party's margin of victory was surprisingly wide: 38.6 percent of the vote, compared to the National Party's 32.9 percent, and 20.4 percent for the *Frente Amplio*, or Broad Front, a loose coalition of parties on the left.

The Colorado and National parties have dominated Uruguayan politics since the mid-19th century. The Colorados, traditionally supported by the urban middle class and workers, enacted the liberal social and economic legislation for which Uruguay was famous even before World War I. This time the Colorados positioned themselves as the party of stability and realism. Accused of being conservative and pro-military, the Colorados found themselves outflanked on the left by their traditional rivals, the National Party. The National Party, which was historically the party of the agrarian, conservative countryside, has in turn been transformed into a reformist, populist political force. Many of the party's rural voters switched to the Colorados this time, while the party won a fair number of voters, particularly young voters, who might otherwise have gone to the Broad Front.

The election results might have been different if the

military had not imprisoned the charismatic Wilson Ferreira, the National Party's preferred candidate and arguably Uruguay's most popular political leader, when he returned home in June after a decade in exile. Ferreira was nevertheless a major presence in the campaign. His face smiled from thousands of posters, and he was elevated to political martyrdom: "Wilson is in prison so that Uruguay may be free." Similarly, the Broad Front's preferred candidate, General Liber Seregni, was kept off the ballot by a military-era law banning certain categories of people from running. Ferreira was released a week after the election; Seregni was active in the campaign. The forced absence of the two men from the ballot compromised but did not destroy the genuineness of the elections.

Uruguayans do not expect miracles from the restoration of democracy. When their elected representatives take office this month, Uruguayans will have regained their liberty, and a horrifying chapter in their political history will have ended. But Sanguinetti's new government will face an empty national treasury and a devastated economy. Unemployment stands at 15 percent, inflation is running at 50 percent annually, and Uruguay's foreign debt has risen to a staggering \$5.3 billion. Each year Uruguay is a little shabbier, a little poorer, than the year before. And Uruguayans know that democracy by itself will not end this long gray decline. Uruguayans are free again. Now comes the hard part.

JAMIE FELLNER

Jamie Fellner, a Washington lawyer, observed the Uruguayan elections for the International Human Rights Law Group.

The Democrats delivered the Republican vote.

REGISTRATION BOOMERANG

BY DAVID OSBORNE

THERE HAS BEEN no shortage of postmortems on the Democrats' defeat in November. But on one issue, the party's plan to win through voter registration, the silence has been almost eerie. Remember the heady days of spring and summer? The Democrats were going to register an army of the poor, the black, the brown, the female, which would descend upon the polls to repudiate the scourge of

David Osborne writes about politics for *TNR*, *The Atlantic*, *Mother Jones*, and other publications.

Reaganism. Ann Lewis, the political director of the Democratic National Committee, spoke of bringing 13 million new voters to the polls, enlarging the electorate by 15 percent. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, intellectual gurus of the movement, wrote of "reorganizing American electoral politics," forcing "a party realignment along class lines."

Well, the results are in, and they are not pretty. Twelve million more people were registered in 1984 than in 1980, but only four million more showed up at the polls. Worse,

the new voters went for Reagan by nearly two to one. In congressional races, new voters split 45 to 39 percent for the Republicans. This is especially discouraging when you consider that perhaps a fifth of all Democratic representatives are conservatives, many of them from the South. When asked which party they preferred, 49 percent of the new voters leaned toward the Republicans, 31 percent toward the Democrats.

In other words, all the effort lavished on signing up new voters seems to have helped reelect Ronald Reagan. "Every new registration group, with the exception of blacks, registered and voted Republican," says Curtis B. Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, which released the figures cited above. Gans is a longtime liberal activist who ran Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign in 1968. And he relied on data collected by Peter Hart, Walter Mondale's pollster. So these figures weren't cooked.

There are plenty of easy explanations for the debacle. The Republicans spent more money and used more sophisticated technology. The Democratic Party failed to get its meager funds out to the states until September. The private efforts by blacks, labor, and women's and environmental groups were undermined by squabbling and turf wars. And of course, the easiest excuse of all: Ronald Reagan was a phenomenally popular incumbent, running in the midst of an economic boom. But all this was predictable. Republicans always spend more money, people always squabble, and Reagan was known to be a powerful candidate.

The truth is that the progressive registration drives succeeded on the most basic level. They did sign up several million new voters. Unfortunately, so did the Republican Party and the Moral Majority. As a result, the percentage of eligible Americans registered to vote increased for the first time since 1964. The problem was not the amount of money or effort invested by liberal activists. It was the basic assumption that motivated them—that increased registration would automatically translate into a Democratic advantage. The theory was flawed, not the practice.

THE MOST PERVASIVE error underlying the registration strategy was the assumption that because nonvoters tend to be poorer and younger than voters, their sudden entry would swing the electorate to the left. But the United States is not Europe, and working-class Americans are not incipient socialists, or even social democrats. Political scientists have examined this question in depth, and they have concluded that if everyone turned up at the polls, the polity might shift a bit to the left on economic issues (jobs, public works, government spending), but a bit to the right on social issues (abortion, busing, women's rights). "If everyone had voted in 1980, nothing would have been different," says Raymond Wolfinger, co-author of *Who Votes?* and the dean on this subject.

These facts were borne out in 1984. According to the exit

polling done by CBS and *The New York Times*, nearly half of all voters with family incomes under \$12,500—the poorest 15 percent of the population—backed Reagan. Of the next 27 percent, those in the \$12,500 to \$24,999 range, 59 percent cast one for the Gipper. If you wonder who all these low-income conservatives are, think of the George Wallace vote, the Moral Majority, and what political analyst Kevin Phillips calls "conservative populism."

A second mistake often made by registration enthusiasts was to assume that most nonvoters are black or Hispanic. Blacks make up only 11 percent of the electorate, Hispanics about six percent. Among nonvoters, even poor whites outnumber blacks and Hispanics. Richard Scammon, former head of the Census Bureau, explains what this means: "If the percentage of black voters goes up ten points and the whites by two points, the gain in gross numbers is with the whites because there are so many more of them. Elections are won by gross numbers."

That is precisely what happened in 1984. Across the South, black registration was up an impressive 31.6 percent over 1980, according to the Voter Education Project. But in five southern states surveyed by *The Washington Post*, more than three times as many whites registered as blacks. The conservative white mobilization, often led by the Moral Majority and no doubt incited by the specter of black gains, was remarkable.

Though many of the whites who registered were Democrats, the conservative drives clearly helped the Republican Party. Republican registration leapt by 56 percent in Louisiana, 31 percent in North Carolina, and 26 percent in Florida. On election day, according to CBS and the *Times*, 72 percent of all southern whites voted for Reagan. The result was a disaster for Democratic candidates, particularly in North Carolina and Texas, the two southern states where the Democrats did the most registration work. The registration strategy not only failed, it probably hurt the party.

EVEN THE REGISTRATION efforts of women's groups, designed to exploit the gender gap, did not pan out. Peter Hart's poll revealed a slightly wider gender gap among new voters than CBS and the *Times* found among all voters—nine percentage points as compared to four. But Reagan won a 57-42 landslide among women, and even the new female voters added far more votes to Reagan's column than to Mondale's. Poll after poll demonstrates that specific groups of women still lean to the right: working-class women, married women, women over 45, and women in the South and Midwest.

Finally, many activists made the mistake of assuming that millions of new registrants meant millions of new voters. The argument, which was repeatedly tirelessly last year, runs like this: the United States may have dismally low turnout rates compared to other democracies, but once people register, more than 80 percent vote. All this is true, for people who take the trouble to register themselves. Why bother, after all, unless you

sincerely intend to vote? But when you register because you've been cornered by a determined volunteer at the supermarket, there's no reason to assume your attitude about voting has changed. As a result, registration drives normally require intensive get-out-the-vote follow-up efforts to bring even a majority of their registrants to the polls.

ARE GET-OUT-THE-VOTE efforts the answer, then? Not really. In the last analysis, politics, not registration drives, brings people to the voting booth. Habitual nonvoters turn out when they are given a reason to vote. During the Depression, FDR's New Deal brought millions of new voters to the polls. Similarly, black mayoral candidates have produced tremendous turnouts. When Carl Stokes ran in Cleveland, back in 1967, 90 percent of all registered black voters came to the polls on primary day. The same goes for conservatives: Ronald Reagan's candidacy helped bring out perhaps a million new voters of fundamentalist stripe in 1980.

This effect worked in the Democrats' favor in 1982, despite the relative absence of voter-registration drives. Hit hard by the worst recession since World War II, blacks, Hispanics, blue-collar workers, and the unemployed voted in unusually high numbers. Overall turnout swelled by more than three percentage points, from 37.5 percent in 1978 to 41.1 percent in 1982. This was the first jump in 16 years. The new voters helped the Democrats win 26 House seats, enough to break Reagan's ideological majority. They also swept the Democrats to power in several key states, including Ohio and Texas.

But 1984 was different. The economy was booming, and this time the passion was on Reagan's side. According to the Hart poll, a disproportionate number of the new voters were from the South, 28 percent were fundamentalists, and 57 percent were between the ages of 18 and 24. All three of these categories went strongly for Reagan. Black turnout shot up by five percentage points over 1980, according to a Census Bureau survey, while white turnout barely increased and Hispanic turnout was stable. Blacks went heavily for Mondale, but there weren't enough of them to offset the overwhelming white vote for Reagan.

Overall, 1984 was another low turnout year: 53.3 percent of the voting-age population cast ballots, compared to 52.6 percent in 1980. "To get those numbers suggests that without all the registration drives, turnout would have been 50 or 51 percent," says Kevin Phillips. "That means you were basically looking at another apathy election." In other words, 1982 was the high turnout year, not 1984. So much for voter registration.

If signing up millions of low-income voters is not the key, what is? To answer that question, it helps to understand why so many Americans no longer bother to vote. Voter turnout was relatively healthy a quarter-century ago. In 1960 almost 63 percent of the voting-age population cast ballots for president, meaning somewhere between 65 and 70 percent of those actually eligible to vote

(felons, noncitizens, mental patients, and the like excluded) showed up at the polls. After 1960, however, turnout went into the longest unbroken slide in American history, a decline far more serious than the ten-point difference between 1960 and 1984 would suggest. As Harvard political scientist Sidney Verba points out: "The main social force that seems to lead people to vote is education, and education has been rising. Barriers to voting, such as poll taxes and difficult registration laws, have been eased. And politics in the last 20 years has certainly been more exciting than it was during the somewhat bland Eisenhower years, and that should be bringing people out to the polls."

The culprit can hardly be registration barriers. The main reason people no longer vote is because they no longer have much faith in our political parties. By August 1980, only 43 percent of those polled by CBS and the *Times* felt there was "an important difference in what the Republican party and the Democratic party stand for."

Under Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party has reversed its decline. Thirty-five percent of those polled now identify themselves as Republicans, Gallup reports. That's more than at any time since the Eisenhower era. The Democrats, meanwhile, have fallen to their lowest level since the end of World War II: 39 percent. During the 1970s, the Democratic Party forfeited its New Deal mantle as the party of economic prosperity and the defense of the working man. It is no coincidence that the largest group of electoral dropouts during that decade were at the low end of the income scale: poor whites, working-class whites, and poor northern blacks.

IT WILL TAKE a political renaissance to bring millions of poor and working-class Americans back into the fold. Another registration campaign won't do it. And that renaissance will not come easily. The party is a broad tent. Bold moves that excite one of its constituencies often alienate the others, particularly when they involve social issues concerning race or sexual morality. These divisions must be transcended by a new politics, built around an economic program that can appeal at once to Yuppies, union members, and minorities—that can reach out, in other words, to the majority of Americans. As Gary Hart proved in 1984, the party desperately needs new ideas. At the same time, those ideas must appeal beyond the middle-class as Hart's (and those of Jerry Brown and Jimmy Carter before him) did not. The party must promise efficient management and economic growth, but it must also have a populist edge, offering jobs, equity, and hope for those untouched by the high-tech boom. The Democrats already have Hart; now they need soul.

Meanwhile, those who poured their energies into voter registration need not be discouraged. In a different year, with a different candidate, voter registration could be an indispensable part of a successful strategy. It is no substitute for the more difficult work, however: defining a new politics, organizing around it, electing candidates, and remaking the party. New voters do not create new politics; new politics create new voters. □

Handouts for the able-bodied man in the gray flannel suit.

CORPORATE WELFARE OUT OF CONTROL

BY GREGORY FOSSEDAL

RONALD REAGAN has elevated the anecdote to an art form—and an effective weapon against the welfare state. Whether relating the tale of a woman receiving \$65,000 in undeserved benefits, or wondering aloud whether there are really many unemployed people in "South Succotash," Reagan has effectively portrayed a social welfare budget riddled with "waste, fraud, and abuse." Now it's time he turned to perhaps the largest, fastest growing, yet least discussed public relief program of the federal government: corporate welfare or, as the Congress Watch lobbying group has dubbed it, "Aid for Dependent Corporations."

Corporate welfare has emerged as a pet theme among many free-enterprise liberals and supply-side conservatives. Both Bill Bradley and Jack Kemp, when attacked about the revenue implications of their tax reform plans, propose trimming corporate welfare as a means of cutting the budget deficit. Yet the subject has received little comprehensive research or analysis. When an aide to Kemp was asked two years ago for specific corporate welfare cuts, he could only offer, "Synthetic fuels . . . the Chrysler and big bank bailouts . . ." before his voice trailed off. Nothing beyond those two? "Well, some others. There really isn't any long list. Jack would love to see one, but right now it doesn't exist."

What research has been done suggests that corporate welfare is more costly than even Kemp or Bradley realizes. Annual studies by Ralph Nader's Congress Watch place the figure at \$80 billion to \$100 billion. A 1984 paper by the Congressional Budget Office estimates \$90 billion. But both studies omit the defense budget, possibly the largest single source of such spending, and most "indirect subsidies"—that is, the impact of programs and regulations that help large corporations and cost the taxpayer money, but do not show up in any well-defined line-item. Add in a conservative estimate for those types of subsidies and for defense spending, and you arrive at the annual corporate welfare check: \$140 billion.

The problem with the corporate welfare freeloaders is that, like the social welfare cheaters, they are hard to find. "Instead of being listed as line-items in the budget, like the Food Stamp program," explains Congress Watch, "corporate welfare resides between the lines—in tax revenue not

collected and loans not repaid. . . . While the budget process involves open debate of social programs and military spending, corporate subsidy programs easily escape scrutiny." Even CBO's vast staff expressed frustration in its modest attempt to list the most direct forms of corporate welfare. "Many industrial support program costs are hidden and not voted on explicitly by the Congress," a CBO report says. "It would be beyond the scope of this paper" to identify such items line by line. What is needed is a few Reagan-like vignettes to make all the waste, fraud, and abuse understandable to the average citizen.

The Corporate Welfare Cadillac: Reagan touches a nerve when he tells stories about poor people who, at taxpayer expense, lead lives of moral dissipation. Remember the one about the guy who bought vodka with his food stamps? Reagan might take a look at the International Monetary Fund and at Continental Bank of Illinois. The IMF was bailed out with \$8 billion in federal money in 1983. The money was intended, the IMF said, to help Third World countries "restructure" their debt, and to prevent the collapse of the entire world banking system. The money, however, was not used to promote any real reforms in economic policy. Its chief effect was to save the careers of loan officers at large banks, whose ill-advised orgy of foreign lending created the threat to the "system" in the first place. In fact, in 1983 and 1984 a record number of small and medium-sized banks went belly up, more than at any time since the Depression. Not to worry, though: when Continental Bank teetered near the brink, the Reagan administration and the Federal Reserve quickly put together a \$4.5 billion rescue package. The banking "safety net" may not catch everyone, but it misses few of the biggies.

Private Sector Public Assistance: Worse than the sleazy recipients who exploit overly generous benefits, however, are the miscreants who go on the dole even though they are well off. Many of the country's largest corporations fit into this category. For example, Exxon and other big energy companies not only receive research grants from the government amounting to \$1.9 billion. In 1983 they also enjoyed \$4.75 billion in tax "incentives" to encourage oil exploration in 1984. Just as the Reagan administration has proposed tighter rules for those on the social welfare dole, it might raise "eligibility standards" for corporate welfare recipients. In 1983 Congress did cut off one of the wealthiest welfare mothers of them all, the Clinch River Breeder Reactor, thus saving \$8.5 billion. But it left intact the ener-

Gregory Fossedal works for the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*.

gy research expenditures, 84 percent of which go to the nuclear power programs of the big utilities—even though not a single nuclear plant has been ordered in the United States since 1974.

Also intact is the \$7.4 billion in loans to the nuclear industry made by the Export-Import Bank from 1981 to 1984, and the \$13.5 billion which the Synthetic Fuels Corporation is authorized to hand out. Lest anyone think that the Synfuel Corporation will offer support to Gildersque entrepreneurs developing a miracle formula for turning chicken feathers into gasoline, guess again. Of 52 important synthetic fuel patents, 49 are owned by the major oil companies.

OTHER ABUSERS can be found at the Small Business Administration and the Export-Import Bank. Both pose as friends of the little guy. Yet one popular SBA loan guarantee program devotes 65 percent of its assistance to firms worth \$100,000 or more, mostly to finance large shopping centers, parking lots, and the like. The Ex-Im Bank, meanwhile, in 1982 directed \$4 billion of its total \$4.4 billion in lending authority to large corporations able to fill huge export orders. As Doug Bandow wrote in *The New York Times* last fall, the bank “is a classic example of corporate welfare: Roughly 70 percent of its loans enrich seven large corporations.” Boeing, Westinghouse, General Electric, and McDonnell Douglas alone take up \$17 billion of the bank’s outstanding credit.

Stretching the Dollars: Conservatives often illustrate the excesses of a social program by noting that the dollars already spent for it would stretch from here to the moon and back. On the corporate welfare rolls, subsidies to agribusiness can be used to make the same point. They have ballooned from a modest \$5 billion in the early 1970s to \$20 billion or more today. Approximately 70 percent of the subsidies go to the 250,000 biggest farmers in the country. Laid end to end, 20 billion dollar bills would stretch to the moon and back four times.

The Handout That Wouldn't Die: Perhaps the greatest source of corporate welfare is the tangled web of provisions governing federal procurement. Reagan himself now likes to recount the horror stories of U.S. defense contracting—the \$8,000 screwdriver and the \$25,000 coffee pot. But even greater institutional waste is generated every year by Congress and the White House, as they extend the life of endangered weapons to see if a little more research and development can fix what’s wrong with the latest gun that won’t shoot or plane that won’t fly. The typical time needed to construct a major weapons system has grown from three to six years in the early 1960s to more than ten years today. If we accept the General Accounting Office’s rule of thumb for the cost of delay—a 30 percent increase for each year tacked on to the weapons procurement cycle—then delays in weapons procurement may be the single greatest source of corporate welfare in the budget.

Other agencies and departments have not been rocked by as many recent procurement scandals. Yet they buy goods and services from the private sector in even larger

amounts, among them Medicare (\$61 billion in 1984), Medicaid (\$21 billion), food programs (\$17 billion), and housing assistance (\$10 billion). More competitive procurement in these agencies, according to estimates from the GAO and the Grace Commission on waste in government, could save between \$5 billion and \$10 billion, most of it presently going to medium and large corporations, and all of it unjustified by the rigors of free-market price competition.

Candy from Babies: The maritime industry is the corporate equivalent of the bureaucrat who, earning a \$60,000 annual salary, remodels his office with millions from the federal school lunch program. Not content with several hundred million dollars in direct subsidies, U.S. shippers have established a “cargo preference” law, under which all official government travel must be conducted in American vessels—even if foreign transport is more available and cheaper. Half of all shipments bought, furnished, or financed by the U.S. government must be shipped on American vessels, regardless of costs. The cargo preference law cost the Food for Peace program \$100 million a year in 1981—money that could have gone to the starving in Ethiopia.

Last but not least on the corporate welfare ledger is the kind of abuse that the social welfare recipients never benefit from: special tax breaks. The largest, such as accelerated depreciation and investment tax credit, spread their benefits across broad classes of industries. Others—permitting the passing of exploration costs for fuel along to consumers, the exclusion of interest on state and local pollution control bonds, and so on—were quite consciously designed to benefit particular sectors.

The hodgepodge of special breaks and exemptions has gradually eroded the corporate income tax. In 1975 the government collected 32 cents in corporate income taxes for every dollar in personal income tax. This year, the figure will be closer to 23 cents on the dollar. The increased complexity of the corporate code has also created wide disparities in the taxes collected from various sectors, greatly distorting the decisions of private investors. A pair of 1983 studies by the Congressional Research Service found effective corporate tax rates as low as 13 percent in the construction industry and as high as 37 percent in the finance, insurance, and real estate businesses. (For an analysis of the supposed economic benefits of these tax breaks, see “Voodoo Incentives,” by Robert S. McIntyre, page 19.)

IT WOULD SEEM a simple matter to cut corporate welfare abuses from the budget and the tax code. Yet this apparently attractive fiscal target has drawn little criticism from journalists or the leaders of either party. The cost of entitlements, the military, and Social Security are regularly identified as candidates for cutbacks in articles on the deficit. Corporate welfare, by contrast, is rarely mentioned. Why?

First, several of the self-proclaimed oracles on the budget and federal spending are corporate welfare recipients themselves. The names of Lee Iacocca and J. Peter Grace come to mind. They have a vested interest in not calling attention to the corporate dole. The original draft of the Grace

Commission report, for example, named numerous politicians who had been especially sycophantic toward corporations and other special interest groups. Among those singled out frequently were Senators James McClure, Robert Byrd, and Ted Stevens; and Representatives Tip O'Neill, Silvio Conte, and Marvin Leath. Grace and his colleagues decided to delete the names in the final version so as not to hurt the report's chance to win acclaim. At about this time, Grace appeared on the cover of *U.S. News & World Report* under the headline "Washington: City Without Guts."

Second, if corporate welfare is hidden, its powerful proponents are not. Business political action committees in 1984 gave as much money to political candidates as labor, liberal, and conservative PACs combined. The business PACs are bipartisan, giving mainly to incumbents and committee chairmen of both parties: \$24 million to Republicans, \$21 million to Democrats in 1984. Not surprisingly, the old guard in both parties is committed to protecting corporate handouts.

Of the top ten Senate recipients of business PAC money in 1984, five were Democrats, including Jim Hunt, Jay Rockefeller, and Lloyd Doggett; on the House side, six out of ten, including the top three: Jim Jones, Joseph Addabbo, and Bruce Morrisson. House Majority leader Jim Wright has led the fight to preserve the synthetic fuel program. Democratic presidential candidates Walter Mondale and Alan Cranston joined the Chamber of Commerce (which is otherwise willing to criticize businessmen for feeding at the public trough) in fighting to save funding for the Export-Import Bank.

Among Democrats, then, the impetus for trimming back corporate welfare will have to come from the party's younger wing: Gary Hart, Bill Bradley, and Bruce Babbitt. A similar generational split emerges among Republicans. Representatives Jack Kemp, Trent Lott, Jim Courter, Robert Walker, and other young turks who drafted the party's 1984 platform are keen to tackle corporate welfare—partly to deflect blame for the deficits from their supply-side tax cutting. Yet Republican leaders in the Senate seem determined to take the old-fashioned route, namely cutting social programs in exchange for defense cuts. The package being drawn up by Republican Senate chieftains Dole, Domenici, Simpson, and others is likely to include Social Security cuts, cost of living freezes for welfare mothers, surgical cuts in Medicare, you name it. The strategy is to get leading business groups and lobbyists behind closed doors and then barter among them to cut the deficit. The unneediest are not likely to suffer in the process.

Thus, any major assault on corporate welfare will probably have to be a joint effort by the young intellectual vanguard of the two parties—a political bridge over the Republican and Democratic establishments. Both sides have much to gain: to attack corporate welfare is to support smaller government, fairness, fiscal responsibility, and free enterprise all at once. But both sides also have to buck the corporations and the conventional wisdom that says corporate welfare is sacred. Can they pull it off anyway? That's the \$140 billion question.

Tax cuts help investment? Guess again.

VOODOO INCENTIVES

BY ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

A YEAR AGO I bought a Whirlpool washing machine and a General Electric dryer. I have no regrets about the washer, but the dryer has been a bit of a disappointment. It's more flimsy than the washer, and the belt is already starting to squeal. What's worse, having bought the G.E. machine makes me feel unpatriotic. Whirlpool, I have since learned, has been doing its utmost to reduce the federal budget deficit by paying what is apparently the highest federal income tax rate among major corporations, and it has contributed to the country's long-term economic health by increasing its investment in new plant and equipment. General Electric, on the other hand, has been the nation's champion tax refund recipient while at the same time cutting back on its investment.

To be precise, from 1981 through 1983 Whirlpool earned \$650 million in pretax profits in the United States and sent \$297 million of that to the U.S. Treasury, for a tax rate of 45.6 percent—just about exactly the 46 percent the corporate tax code nominally prescribes. High taxes notwithstanding, Whirlpool managed to increase its capital spending by seven percent. In contrast, General Electric earned \$6.5 billion in domestic profits, but paid no income taxes. Taking advantage of the many "investment tax incentives" provided by the 1981 tax cut, G.E. actually got the Treasury to supplement its earnings with \$283 million in tax rebates. The company compounded the indignity by cutting its purchases of new plant and equipment by 15 percent between 1981 and 1983. In short, General Electric has been taking the taxpayer to the cleaners.

Although the Whirlpool-G.E. comparison is striking, it is not atypical. Indeed, it neatly illustrates the ironic results of the first three years of the Reagan administration's "supply-side" tax program. A random sampling of 250 of the country's largest and most profitable companies that we recently completed at Citizens for Tax Justice demonstrates that the companies that enjoyed the most tax "incentives" cut their investment the most. Companies with at least one no-tax year between 1981 and 1983 reduced investment by 15.7 percent. Firms that paid a total of no taxes or actually received net tax rebates over the three years cut investment by 19.3 percent. An even more select group—companies that did not pay taxes in any of the three years—slashed investment by 29.6 percent. In sharp contrast, the 50 companies with the highest tax rates over the three years—the firms that by supply-side thinking had the least incentive to invest—increased their capital investment by a total of 4.3 percent,

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despite paying 33.1 percent of their profits in taxes.

How can this inverse correlation between "incentives" and investment be explained? Perhaps, you might think, the nontaxed companies that cut investment simply weren't doing very well. But all of the corporations we examined were highly profitable. In fact, the after-tax profits of the companies paying no taxes between 1981 and 1983 were almost exactly equal to the after-tax earnings of the 50 highest taxed firms. Or perhaps our study misses the full benefits of the 1984 recovery. Because our results were based on the latest corporate annual reports to shareholders, we were necessarily limited to the first three years of the Reagan economic program. But even if the resurgence in investment in 1984 is included, the record is still dismal. Over the four years of President Reagan's first term, real business investment in plant and equipment rose by only 3.5 percent—far less than the 28.6 percent increase in real plant and equipment in the previous four years.

The best explanation is that companies invest only when they need new plant and equipment to produce products they can sell to consumers. When consumers don't spend money, plants are idled and new investment drops. Taxes—or lack thereof—don't seem to have much to do with it.

Even as the ink was drying on the Reagan tax bill in August 1981, the business managers responsible for investment decisions (as opposed to the corporate lobbyists, whose job is solely to secure lower taxes) began explaining why the massive new tax breaks really wouldn't increase their investment plans after all. The chairman of one major U.S. corporation told *The New York Times* that "with or without the tax bill we would have done what we did in 1981 and what we plan to do in 1982. One can spend money on men and materials only at a given rate. Beyond that it becomes foolish."

THE ANNUAL reports of the companies we surveyed confirm that investment decisions are determined by "demand-side" market forces rather than by "supply-side" theories. W.R. Grace & Co., for example, despite \$684.1 million in profits between 1981 and 1983, actually made \$12.5 million off the tax system by selling its excess tax breaks. At the same time, it reduced new investment by 15.8 percent in 1982 and by another 37 percent in 1983. In its 1983 annual report, the company explained that investment was cut "in response to the reduced demand" for its products. (Incidentally, the chairman of W.R. Grace is J. Peter Grace, namesake of the commission on government waste. He thus enjoys a unique dual role: in his free time, he's a critic of "wasteful" federal spending; during business hours, he's the recipient of it.)

Many other firms also offered such "demand-side" explanations for their investment cutbacks. Tenneco cited "the weakness in natural gas demand" to explain its 31.8 percent investment drop between 1981 and 1983, despite its use of tax "incentives" to pay no taxes on \$2.7 billion in profits and claim an extra \$189 million in tax rebates. Colt

Industries, which lobbied intensively for the "incentives" in the 1981 Reagan tax bill, saw its capital spending peak in 1980. By 1983, Colt had reduced its investment spending by 39 percent from 1980, explaining to shareholders that "the slow recovery in capital spending by American industry continued to affect our capital goods businesses."

Although tax breaks do not seem to stimulate corporate investment, they do increase after-tax profits. And the added corporate cash flow they generate comes with no strings attached. It can be used to increase dividends, expand cash reserves, fund mergers or acquisitions, raise executive pay, or beef up advertising budgets. The companies we studied increased dividends by 17 percent over the three years, even as their investment fell by 15.5 percent. Many low-tax corporations, including G.E., Phillips Petroleum, Fluor Corp., and Union Pacific, bragged about their additions to cash reserves. And a large number of firms reported substantial use of funds to acquire other companies—not suprising given the record-breaking \$209 billion wave of mergers over the 1981-83 period (with 1984 another \$100-billion-plus record).

THE EVIDENCE that the Reagan administration's original loophole-based economic strategy was misdirected has been accumulating since it was enacted. As early as September 1981, Treasury Secretary Donald Regan was complaining about the lack of business response to the supposed incentives. "It's like dropping a coin down a well," he told a group of Midwestern businessmen. "All I'm hearing is a hollow clink." By mid-1982, most of the self-styled "supply-siders" had left the Treasury in disgrace, their economic prognostications shattered by the deepest recession since the 1930s. As the boom in tax shelters continued to make a mockery of "supply-side" promises, others remaining at Treasury became increasingly outspoken in their distaste for loopholes. Last April assistant treasury secretary John Chapoton surprised a Texas audience by calling for repeal of the Reagan administration's own "Accelerated Cost Recovery System"—the corporate tax code's single biggest loophole.

The tax reform plan proposed in November by the Treasury was the final repudiation of the "incentives" approach. The Treasury proposal would eliminate almost all the loopholes that currently clutter the corporate tax laws. It would cut the corporate tax rate from 46 to 33 percent—and would still raise \$160 billion in additional corporate income taxes by 1990. "The taxation of capital and business income in the United States is deeply flawed," the Treasury proposal declares. "It is best characterized as irrational. . . . The tax law provides subsidies to particular forms of investment that are unfair and that seriously distort choices in the use of the Nation's scarce capital." If there is any sense of accountability in Washington, no corporate lobbyist—no matter how persuasive, no matter how many campaign contributions he or she may control—should be able to prevent the repeal of the host of corporate tax "incentives" that, based on the overwhelming evidence, have failed. □

Born and died in Northern Europe, a victim of success.

THE DEATH OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

BY ALAN WOLFE

Copenhagen

CAPITALISM HAS BEEN the dominant force in the world economy in the 20th century, but socialism has been the dominant language in the world of politics. From a North American perspective, it is easy to forget socialism's ubiquity. The Soviet Union, of course, appropriated for itself and its Eastern European neighbors the discourse of Marx. The former colonies of the Western powers, upon achieving independence, proclaimed one form of socialism or another as their ultimate objective. And even in Northern Europe, the epicenter of capitalist development, the attainment of suffrage by the working class was accompanied by the electoral triumph of social democracy—the form the socialist vision took when it confronted the realities of politics in the here and now.

It is hardly news that the Soviet Union tarnished the socialist ideal some time ago. Nor is it surprising that socialism, originally conceived as the future of the industrial world, has been misapplied in peasant societies. Social democracy, by contrast, retained its sense of hope much longer. Marquis Childs told us a generation ago that Sweden was "The Middle Way" between decadent capitalism and Stalinist-style communism. Social democracy miraculously won the support of working classes without threatening the advantages of the dominant classes. Had social democracy been more cautious, parties to its left might have tapped working-class grievances. Had it been more radical, parties to its right would have exploited capitalist resentment.

Such balancing acts are rare in history, and this one may finally have ended. Revisiting Sweden in the 1970s, Childs offered a far more cautious judgment of social democracy in his book *The Middle Way on Trial*. It just may be, he concluded, that the costs of the middle way leave nothing left over for growth. If social democracy has now joined the other forms of socialism either in disrepute or in impracticality, then the future of socialism is more problematic now than at any time since its proclamation.

Over the last few years in one Northern European country after another where social democrats once dominated politics, startling electoral transformations have taken place. In Holland a conservative government that came to power in 1982 cut public-sector wages and domestic

spending. A conservative coalition in Belgium has been considering a controversial overhaul of the entire welfare system. West Germany's Social Democratic Party, the first socialist party to choose reform over revolution, is under attack from two directions. To its left, the Green Party has won enough votes to gain parliamentary representation, and to the right the Christian Democrats under Helmut Kohl have joined with the Free Democrats to organize the government.

In Scandinavia the trend is even more pronounced. Sweden's Social Democrats, who governed for 44 consecutive years, lost power in 1976 to a conservative government. They were able to regain power in 1980, but public opinion polls in recent months show that they will likely lose the elections this September. Norway has a right-wing government articulating its own version of supply-side economics, one likely to retain power in the Norwegian elections also scheduled for November. And in Denmark, conservative Poul Schlüter heads a four-party coalition that de-indexed wages, cut unemployment insurance and workmen's compensation benefits, and reduced block grants to local governments. It is likely that by the fall of 1985 all three Scandinavian countries will be simultaneously governed by conservatives for the first time in more than half a century. The truth is that many social democrats are relieved to be out of power, recognizing that they have no policies capable of winning popular majorities while retaining the influence of banks, multinational corporations, and the United States.

The crisis of social democracy does not represent just another change of political seasons. It is deep, international, and probably permanent. In many ways social democrats are experiencing a dilemma faced earlier by capitalist parties: Could other political parties be entrusted to govern the system they had established? The capitalist parties, at least until the rise of Thatcher and Reagan, had no choice but to allow more reformist parties to govern for them. Now social democrats are increasingly seeing their welfare programs being administered by capitalist governments.

But there is one major difference. Socialist ideas have long served less as a blueprint for economic planning or public policy than as an ideal. This was true even in the United States, where the welfare state developed so timidly. Without a sense that progress leads inevitably toward a more rational organization of society, politics becomes either a struggle for personal or group advantage in the

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present or a nostalgic longing for a better world presumed to have existed in the past. Social democracy, in other words, represents the last gasp of the 19th-century optimistic ideal of progress and belief in human perfection.

CERTAINLY there are major economic factors underlying the crisis of social democracy. Social democrats found the key to political survival in economic growth. So long as economies expanded, it was always possible to finance new social welfare programs while at the same time guaranteeing capitalist profit. Keynes plus Beveridge was the general formula. But to a far greater degree than many socialists would like to admit, social democracy became the realization, not the transformation, of advanced capitalism. When energy shocks, weak currencies, balance-of-payments deficits, and unbalanced budgets devastated economic growth in Northern Europe in the late 1970s, the political growth of social democracy stopped as well.

But the economy stopped expanding far more readily than did the social programs it once financed. Despite recessions, government spending increased throughout the 1970s. In Denmark, for example, between 1960 and 1980 collective consumption as a percentage of GNP rose from 13 percent to 28 percent, while taxes increased from 23 percent to 45 percent of GNP and the percentage of public employees in the labor force doubled.

All of the Northern European welfare states paid for the new social programs by borrowing. Deficit spending evolved from a policy option to an absolute necessity. In Sweden a third of the national budget is borrowed; in Denmark the figure is closer to 40 percent. Like many Third World countries, these countries are now caught in a self-perpetuating cycle where the debt grows by itself. In Denmark, Prime Minister Schlüter's main achievement has been not to reduce the deficit but merely to stop the rate at which it had been growing. If government spending had remained constant in the early 1970s, the budget would be running a surplus now, and the Danish Social Democrats would probably still be in power. But if they had restrained social spending in the early 1970s, they might well have lost power even earlier. For if social democrats cannot offer expanded services, what can they offer?

The impasse of social democracy has naturally increased the strength of the right. At a time when social democracy is barely holding its own, conservative parties are not only increasing their appeal, but are cooperating with each other in coalition governments with surprising accord. Although in many cases split between ideological believers in the market and so-called value conservatives who emphasize a religious and rural outlook, Scandinavian conservatives are taking the political initiative and transforming public life in Northern Europe.

One of the most striking strengths of the right's resurgence is the conservative drift of younger voters. Just as the 1984 campaign showed that young Americans preferred Gary Hart and Ronald Reagan to Walter Mondale, so polls throughout Northern Europe show younger voters far less committed to social democracy than their par-

ents. In the Danish parliamentary elections in 1984, the Social Democrats managed to avoid a rout only by mobilizing older pensioners to compensate for the large gains made by Conservatives among the youngest voters. In Sweden, sociologist Hans L. Zetterberg draws a portrait of two "typical" Swedes: Sven Svensson, a loyal middle-aged Social Democrat, and Mikael Karlsson, a young sales engineer who is generally apolitical but who worries about taxes. Svensson's worldview is shaped by an overriding quest for security, while Karlsson, in Zetterberg's account, feels that things are not working out right even if he cannot explain why.

Once the welfare state became a background assumption rather than a goal requiring struggle, its costs became more visible than its benefits. Two perceptions shaped the successor generation to the welfare state. One was that taxes were too high. The other was that the programs paid for by the taxes seemed to help everyone but themselves. It is not surprising that the effect of these perceptions was to lead them to question the fundamental assumptions of social democracy: that security is defined by holding fast to what you have; that politics is a long-term process that pays its rewards in the future; that any sign of impatience threatens to undermine the delicate consensus that holds the whole thing together; and that only through organizations and institutional ties can one protect one's place in a complicated, but essentially unchangeable, social hierarchy. Social democracy, in short, is the baggage that the older generation is willing to carry all its life.

BUT FOR the next generation that knows nothing of war and depression, security at any price is just too expensive. If it is true that support for the welfare state is dying out, then we are witnessing a sharp break with a historical pattern in which young people regenerate society by injecting progressive ideas periodically into traditional values. Since the 19th century Western politics has proceeded from restricted to expanded suffrage, from privilege to equality, from the market to the state, and from religion and tradition to secularization, progress, and modern notions of social solidarity. The left, in other words, has fought its political struggles in one generation to see them realized in the next. Will parties of the right, paradoxically, now become parties of the future? Probably not. Politics is too complicated for a simple scheme in which one ideology alternates with another.

One might instead emphasize the similarities between young conservative and radical voters. The fictitious Mikael Karlsson actually has more in common with the people protesting the construction of a new runway at the Frankfurt Airport or marching against nuclear weapons than he realizes. Both demonstrate a certain impatience with politics; both are anxious to see immediate results rather than secure pensions in some future that might never be reached. Both are dissatisfied with existing institutions and parties, preferring either apolitical withdrawal from the system or some form of direct action. Finally, at least in this part of the world, both have a tendency to

understand politics in essentially cultural terms, to place greater emphasis on life-style than on purely material satisfactions. It is therefore not surprising that polls show younger voters in Northern Europe of all political persuasions are attracted to themes associated with peace and environmental protection. Whether the politics of the post-social democratic world will be "left" or "right" is difficult to say.

THIS IDEOLOGICAL confusion may be the sign of a deeper change in Western political thinking. One great accomplishment of socialist ideology in the 20th century is that it defined not only the boundary of the left, but also the worldview of the right. Without socialism—and in the Western European case, social democracy—to oppose, conservatives would have little else upon which to agree. As socialism begins to decline, it takes with it the very distinction between right and left. Confusion, not polarization, is the result. Without a movement that defines the limits of the possible, politics enters a period in which ideologies become as confused as the voters who once supported them.

We may well be at the end of an ideological era. Throughout most of the 19th century, capitalist political parties kept alive a sense that the future would be a continuation and improvement of the past. But beginning around 1890 in Europe (a bit later in North America), the working classes gained suffrage, and capitalism began to lose its appeal. Just at the point where capitalist ideology failed to guarantee a utopian harmony of interests in some arcadian future, social democracy came along. The capitalist rationality of Adam Smith and the socialist evolutionism of Karl Marx were both part of the same essentially Enlightenment notion of human development.

Neither the "new right" faith in the market that has triumphed in Great Britain and the United States, nor the "new left" consciousness that has evolved into the Green parties in Northern Europe, descends from the optimistic side of the Enlightenment. Neoconservatism, unlike classical liberalism, receives its inspiration from Hobbes and his emphasis on authority, not Locke and his sympathy for change. Unlike Bentham and Mill, who opposed colonialism and militarism, today's advocates of a market economy turn statist in matters of civil liberty and national defense. In a word, the core assumptions of neoconservatism about the nature of man are pessimistic and cynical, a far cry from Locke's *tabula rasa*. Similarly, the Green movements are attracted to an apocalyptic, religiously inspired sense of awe in the face of nuclear extermination. If they have a hero in the Enlightenment at all, it is Rousseau, the most ambiguous of its children, and the one who least shared an automatic faith in progress and growth. Unlike socialism, and certainly unlike social democracy, such movements are predicated on the assumption that the present is a radical break with the past and that the future is most likely not to exist at all if social change evolves continuously from one generation to the next. The demise of social democracy threatens to take with it the Victorian ideal of progress.

The failure of social democracy is due, above all else, to its inability to retain support in this milieu of pessimism and apocalypse. The triumph of social democracy gave to the majority something they never had before: a degree of economic dignity that made it possible for them to think of themselves as citizens rather than subjects—that is, as people who could act on the state rather than having the state act on them. But this singular accomplishment forced people to think about the purpose and meaning of social life, and they discovered that nowhere in the social democratic commitment to public bureaucracy and private caution was there a satisfying answer.

The countries of Northern Europe that put their faith in social democracy have become materially prosperous, even under difficult economic circumstances. They have achieved a degree of civility and order that stands in sharp contrast to the urban chaos of, say, London, much less New York. But it is also clear that these impressive accomplishments are not enough. Bureaucracy really is stifling. The assumption by the state of social responsibility means less of a sense of personal responsibility. Younger people, with little to look forward to, have created a culture of extreme alienation and even violence in Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. For a part of the world that produced Strindberg, Munch, Ibsen, and Bergman, there seems too much complacency, too little *angst*. Social democracy has produced a good life for nearly all, a great life for too few.

The passing of social democracy suggests that the 20th century has finally caught up with itself. "We civilizations now know we are mortal," wrote Paul Valéry in 1919. World War I instilled into the Western intellectual consciousness a sense of doom that has affected literature, poetry, and art ever since. Yet politics, which caused the crisis in the first place, remained relatively immune, despite fascist appeals during the 1930s. Even though another world war was fought and nuclear weapons unleashed, the West after World War II became politically committed to an ideology securely within the pre-modernistic outlook that emphasized order, reason, and evolution. The demise of social democracy raises the disturbing possibility that the modernist consciousness, which earlier in this century gave us chaos, atonality, and irrationality, may come to affect our larger political sensibility.

The problem with social democracy, then, may be that it makes far too much sense, especially in a century that makes so little. For all its conservatism, moderation, and caution, social democracy seems to have been a bit too much of a good thing for its beneficiaries to appreciate. If that is the case, then the prospects for an even more radical kind of socialism dim. Yet despite the conservatism that has come over Western political systems, there is no doubt that a time will come when a desire to control and direct fate will again be a force that politicians cannot resist. Should that happen, the radical impulse will return; it will, however, need some other outlet than 19th-century notions about inevitable progress brought about through state control. □

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Starting with Murder

The interviews with Joel and Ethan Coen specify that they are soft-spoken and well-educated. Apparently this is because their film is a gory thriller, and the press doesn't want us to think that such a picture is necessarily the work of ignorant roughnecks. In fact the Coen brothers—Joel directs, Ethan produces, both are under 30—are rather more

Blood Simple
(Circle Films)

typical of murder filmmakers than not: members of the clever university-bred generation of pop manufacturers.

Blood Simple, which the Coens wrote together, is one more first film that grows out of films seen, one more first film in the murder genre. This kind of beginning is quite familiar, here and abroad, ranging in quality all the way from Godard's *Breathless* down to Bogdanovich's *Targets* and points beneath. The *film noir* attracts beginners because, as in Godard's case, it provides an immediacy with which to treat large themes or because, as in most cases, it provides a vent for stored-up adolescent movie fantasies and doesn't require much depth of human understanding. My troubles with *Blood Simple* are not because of its genre, an almost venerable mode of debut, but because its ingenuities are strained and its plot frazzled.

Let's look at some of the plot, already well spilled in Coen interviews and in reviews. What we get first over some shots of Texas landscapes is a monologue about the speaker's dislike of complainers: complaining isn't done in Texas, we hear. As it turns out: (a.) the speaker is a private eye; (b.) the monologue, gnomic and portentous, has nothing to do with the story.

Then, after the credits, we see the wife of a well-heeled Texas saloon owner—Frances McDormand and Dan Hedaya, respectively—running away from her husband to Houston. She is

being driven through the rainy night by one of his bartenders, John Getz, who is doing it only as a favor to her. When she asks why, he says that he has always liked her. She asks him to stop the car. When they stop, they note that they are being followed by a VW Rabbit. Then, despite the fact that she has not been running away *with* Getz, despite the knowledge that they are being followed, the pair proceed to a motel.

Next morning Hedaya calls the motel and asks Getz how he enjoyed himself. And then, after the wife has given up flight from her husband because of Getz's interest in her, after the husband has revealed that he knows of the motel night, wife and lover return to the husband's house. So begins this supposedly fate-driven but clumsily carpentered story.

In the VW Rabbit is a fat private eye, M. Emmet Walsh. (Some private eye! He drives the only car of its kind in the whole picture.) He brings Hedaya photographs of the motel pair *in flagrante*. Soon after, Hedaya hires Walsh to kill the pair, who are now living in Getz's house. Walsh accepts, but we soon suspect that he has a trick in mind because he breaks into Getz's house at night and does not touch the sleeping pair; he only steals McDormand's pearl-handled revolver. (Some private eye! He parks his VW directly in front of the house he intends to enter, then goes in wearing squeaky shoes.) That revolver has been "planted" earlier, as well as the fact that it contains only three bullets.

Walsh's gimmick is to fake blood on some photographs of the sleeping lovers to prove their deaths to Hedaya. After collecting his payment, Walsh shoots Hedaya in the chest with the wife's pistol, which he leaves there. Unwittingly, he also leaves his engraved cigarette lighter. Getz then goes to Hedaya's office to collect salary due, discovers the body and McDormand's gun. To protect her, as he thinks, Getz decides to dispose of the body. He puts

the pistol in Hedaya's pocket. He tries to clean up the small sea of blood on the office floor (the single stupidest, most futile act in the film), dumps the corpse in the back seat of his car, and drives out into the country night. He stops along the road to be sick (several sickings-up in the film—to show sensitivity, I guess). When he gets back into the car, he finds that the corpse has crawled out into the road. I suppose the Coens have medical data to prove that a person who had been shot in the middle of the chest and had lost quarts of blood could still be alive and mobile; but all I could think of was film data, previous stories in which dead people weren't really snuffed and could grab their killers' legs. Getz doesn't quite have the nerve to run over the dying man, as he first contemplates; but he does have the nerve to drive him out into a field and bury him alive. (Touches of De Palma here.) While this burial is going on, the corpse ("corpse") pulls the pistol from his pocket. Getz sees the gun aimed at him and lets Hedaya pull the trigger twice. (A touch of *Yojimbo* here.) How did Getz know the hammer would fall twice on empty chambers? Why didn't he care? Anyway, he then takes the gun back and completes the interment although, for a time, we see

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Falasha: Exile of the Black Jews. A documentary, shot mostly in Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Egypt, that reveals much on its fascinating, grim subject. (Reviewed 2/18/85)

1984. John Hurt and Richard Burton are splendid as Winston and O'Brien. The visual texture is excellent. The script, predictably, sticks to plot essentials. (2/4/85)

A Passage to India. This Forster adaptation could be called honorable, except that the word suggests dullness. David Lean's film is excitingly acted, beautifully made. (1/21/85)

Witness. Oxymoron: a lovely thriller. Trite situation—a murder witness (a child) in danger from the killers—but it's set in Amish country, which is the real protagonist. (2/18/85)

SK

Hedaya's chest heaving under the dirt.

Enough of the plot—except to add that Walsh discovers he has left his lighter in Hedaya's office, goes back to recover it, and sees that the body is gone. Because (I suppose) he thinks they have his lighter, although they don't, he tracks the pair down, kills the man, and is himself killed by the third bullet in the gun. (The second went off in an accident.)

THE SOLE survivor of the original four is the wife. Why? There's no cynical twist in it because she doesn't even know what really happened. The real center of the story is Walsh: he is the biter bit. With him on the relative sidelines, the story just flops along until it stops, without a conclusion.

And it's Walsh who has the showiest part, hardly original but at least with more stock décor than the other three. The cinematography of Barry Sonnenfeld is done in a palette of syrups, much less *film noir* than *film orange*. Joel Coen's much-praised camera style has three chief characteristics. First, ground-level shots, including the opening shot right down at the level of a highway surface (first time I've seen that since *Electra Glide in Blue*, 1973), followed by much rushing over lawn and floors (as in Kubrick's *The Shining*). Second, many ceiling shots, some of them through a slowly turning fan. Third, vacant-screen shots into which a face or object moves. In sum, Coen's style is an unabashed stroll down Memory Lane.

The joint Coen ingenuity soars to its apex in the last sequence. Walsh reaches around from a window in an apartment to open a window in the next apartment, and his hand is pinned to the windowsill with a knife. (The knife, too, has been "planted" earlier.) How the Coens must have exulted when they thought of it. Then they capped it! With his other hand Walsh shoots a lot of holes through the plywood wall so that he can punch through the wall and pull the knife out of his pinned hand. Then they capped that. Walsh is shot in a bathroom and falls next to a toilet, his head under a washbasin. The pipes drip on him, slowly. That's the last shot. Talk about fearless, candid symbolism.

Well, much talk there has been. (Less talk about the ridiculously trite reappearance of the buried husband near the end, which turns out, folks, to be

only a nightmare.) The press has widely celebrated *Blood Simple* as a historically important debut and has, in anticipation, been defending it against censure for its gore. The real argument against it is that it's not very good of its kind, for reasons given above and because, unlike the best *films noirs*, it has no sense of the real witches chuckling high above the futile witcheries of men.

What lies ahead of the Coen brothers? (We'll soon get a considerable hint:

another film is already finished.) Will they move on from early murder films, as Kubrick did, to considerable achievements? Will they refine their murder pictures, like Hitchcock? Or will they join De Palma, now up to his nose in his gilded cesspool? Keep tuned. But in a twelvemonth that saw the debuts of Eagle Pennell (*Last Night at the Alamo*) and Jim Jarmusch (*Stranger than Paradise*), the Coen brothers seem only smart-ass. No, smart half-ass.

EDWARD ROTHSTEIN ON MUSIC

Schumann's Secret

"I should like to paint a picture of his spiritual life," Robert Schumann wrote in 1830, "but I do not know him fully: he has hidden himself behind a heavy veil, whether consciously or unconsciously." The 20-year-old was writing, mysteriously, about himself, a composer who, he claimed, was "neither acute in perception nor strong in reflective thought." But Schumann was acute enough at least in this perception: the heavy veil he lowered still seems firmly in place. Of all 19th-century composers for the piano, Schumann remains both the most elusive and the most allusive, the more perplexing for seeming easily understood.

On the surface, we have little problem with his music at all. *Träumerei*, after all, is hardly a difficult listening experience; audiences swoon at its sighs. And Schumann is almost always careful to provide appropriate titles to his compositions, so their pictorial point cannot be missed—in translation: "Butterflies," "Forest Scenes," "Carnival Jest," "Scenes from Childhood." There are even musical quotations and invocations of other music that seem to make Schumann's program clear: a hint of Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto or a quote from a Beethoven song in the *Fantasie* written in Beethoven's honor; a quotation from the "Marseillaise"—an anthem banned in Vienna—in *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*; a theme by Clara Wieck in *Davidsbündlertänze*, a work which makes reference again and again to the composer's love for his future wife. Even beginning piano stu-

dents innocently make Schumann's easy acquaintance in *Album für die Jugend* with "The Happy Farmer" or "The Wild Horseman."

But a vague uneasiness lies under this transparent simplicity. A shadow falls across each image; inner voices fail to resolve, rhythms suddenly shift and bar lines dissolve, and before a cadence can even fully establish itself, another episode spins into place, deliberately unsettling atmosphere and sensibility. The music at times resists being sensible at all. Schumann said of *Carnaval*, an eccentric parade of 21 related imagistic episodes: "Each new piece cancels out the last and not everyone can accommodate himself to that."

I always thought that this almost perverse musical dissociation was what left me displeased with performances of these compositions. I felt teased by some mystery which was never revealed, or distracted by a spectacle that never cohered. What was all this fuss about, this carousel of imagery and allusion? But when playing Schumann at the piano, when stumbling through *Carnaval* or studying *Kinderszenen*, roughly sketching out the *Fantasie* and practising *Faschingsschwank*, I have a completely different feeling. What seemed grotesque, or absurdly willful, in professional performance, a mere curiosity in the history of the Romantic movement, becomes, when played by my own amateurish fingers, something extraordinary, neither simple nor arcane. To a certain extent, this is because my attention is focused as

much on execution as on the music: learning how to give a drunken buoyancy to the accents of *Faschingsschwank* or create a supple, lilting piano tone in *Kinderszenen*. But it is also because of something in the music itself.

In a remarkable essay on Schumann in Roland Barthes's *The Responsibility of Forms*, the French critic discussed a similar sensation:

I have always been struck by this paradox: that a certain piece of Schumann's delighted me when I played it (approximately), and rather disappointed me when I heard it on records: then it seemed mysteriously impoverished, incomplete.

Schumann's music, Barthes argued, connects with the body of the player. It is music "of the amorous and imprisoned soul that *speaks to itself*." It seems written solely for the person who plays it.

BARTHES argued that for the same reason, contemporary Schumann performances are unsatisfactory. For Schumann, as for much of the 19th century, playing and listening were generally parts of the same private activity. In his letters, the composer often made a distinction between his private music and his more "public" works; he even inserted the words "*de concert*" in his title for the *Paganini Etudes* (which "lend themselves to public performance"). But as Barthes points out, listening to the piano has in this century become solely a public activity detached from any personal contact with the instrument. The contemporary pianist knows no distinction between private and public playing; he substitutes for the "practice" of music a "chilly prowess," alien to the listening and playing body, and so alien to Schumann's music which is "refractory to professional approach."

And indeed, listening to a series of performances on recordings left me wondering what the world of Schumann had to offer at all. The modern performance style, which is either matter-of-fact and pictorially literal, or self-consciously "sensitive" and calculatedly overwrought, leaves this music sounding thoroughly unconvincing. Claudio Arrau, for example, who has been enshrined by some listeners as a master of Romantic imagination, often seems unable to accept the idiosyncrasies of Schumann's world. In a 1983 Philips ten-record compendium of his

Schumann performances (6768 353), he treats dances as if they were abstract rhythms, fantastical outbursts as if loaded with metaphysical significance; his hints of rubato and shifts in tone can also distract even from Schumann's distractions. Jörg Demus, in many of his recordings of the complete piano works (Intercord 185.950), is far more open to the roles Schumann takes on—the composer's playfulness with tone and voice—and can even be exuberant, but he still leaves one puzzling over Schumann as if over a curiosity.

Many pianists, in fact, caught in a typically "Romantic" gesture, bend Schumann to their own personal visions. Martha Argerich's recent performances of *Kinderszenen* and *Kreisleriana* (Deutsche Grammophon 410 653-1) at times seem a parody of Romantic style, taking the "personal" voice to the point of caricature. Murray Perahia (CBS Masterworks M32299 and M34539) is uniformly intelligent, but, as in a performance of the *Fantasie* at New York's 92d Street Y last fall, overly reflective, even ponderous in his gentle fashion. I could go on and on, offering reservations about Alfred Brendel's sophisticated gentility (Philips 6725 034), or Richard Goode's uncharacteristic meandering (Nonesuch D-79014), or Daniel Barenboim's adult piety when playing *Kinderszenen* (Deutsche Grammophon 2543 525). There are moments in these recordings when Schumann's style can be sensed: its whirl of images, its brusque, nearly baroque battle cries, its melancholy exploration of the carnival and masque. But most performances remain unconvincing and unconvinced. Everything is professional, little is sensuous, much is irrelevant.

SCHUMANN'S compositions are often remarkably concentrated on paper, with shared motifs and a calculated dramatic structure worked out for each cycle; but the way this music sounds coherent is not through professional polish, or through understanding of the musical techniques involved, or even through impressionistic accuracy in dealing with the composer's images and personas. Ultimately, I think, the only way Schumann's piano music can be coherently performed (and this is one reason why it is always closer to the player than to the listener) is through creating an image of the composer himself behind the music; one needs to feel a particular person experiencing the

world in a particular way. Schumann is the key to these works; he made his own personality and sensibility their very subject.

EACH OF the major piano works, in fact, bears a relationship to events and persons in Schumann's most turbulent decade, the 1830s. Like the titles of the works, some of these connections are obvious: the allusions, for example, to his beloved Clara in the *Fantasie*. But at the same time, just as the music undercuts its own seeming simplicity, Schumann quite consciously disguised himself, making it difficult for those who would insist on discerning the man behind the music. He based one of his earliest works, *Papillons*, on a masquerade scene from Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre*: "A masquerade," the poet writes, "is perhaps the most perfect form in which life can enact the fancies of poetry." In a masked ball,

all things which are normally separate from each other, even the different seasons and religions; those who are friends and those who are enemies, are drawn into a single vibrant, happy circle. The circle . . . moves in the sphere of music, which is the realm of the spiritual, as the mask is the realm of the physical.

This image must have stayed with Schumann; for a decade he did indeed treat music as a spiritual masked ball, a carnival, a "*Fasching*," in which all ordinary relations, all social manners, all sustained discourse, were overturned, creating new relations and unions. The same desire for distance from ordinary bourgeois life drew him to the world of children, in *Kinderball*, *Kinderszenen*, *Kindersonate*, *Album für die Jugend*. The image of a masquerade was not just a literary conceit. In *Carnaval*, for example, there are obvious carnival figures, dances titled with such commedia names as "Arlequin" and "Pierrot"; but the carnival is also in the elusions and elisions of the music itself, its joining of opposing attitudes on the same page, its breaking of expectations, and glimpses of masked allusions.

Schumann even created psychic masks, roles which at times took over his music, beings who signed his music criticism and to whom he attributed some of his early works: Florestan the outspoken and Eusebius the reflective. The early version of *Carnaval*, for example, was attributed to "Florestan." Pieces of *Carnaval* bear secret, coded, titles, such as "*Chiarina*," signifying the

beloved Clara. And a section of the work, meant never to be played, is titled "Sphinxes" in which three musical cryptograms are presented. These "Sphinxes" are motifs, composed of notes whose German names are A, S (E flat), C, and H (B natural). These letters are the only ones in Schumann's name which have musical counterparts; they also spell out the native town of a woman who Schumann almost married before Clara—until he found out she was born illegitimate.

Such masks and secrets, it would seem, served to split the music and its subject off from the common bourgeois world, creating a private universe. From Schumann's perspective, that world becomes a carnival, experienced as a fantastical, sometimes threatening kaleidoscope of mixed impressions. But at the same time that the music thrives on that carnival, it also seems to withdraw from it in solitude, remaining ironically free from all social restrictions, like a masked observer at a ball.

Schumann was thus an archetypal Romantic. He worshipped, for example, the attenuated fantasies of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul, which showed interior dreams and desires to be more powerful than rational social demands. Schumann's *Kreisleriana* is named after Kreisler, Hoffmann's fictional musician who seems to speak with Schumann's voice:

Often I find surging up within me a wild, mad desire for something which I seek outside myself with an ever unsatisfied eagerness, because in reality, that something is in my own heart, an obscure mystery, a confused and enigmatic dream of a paradise of utter peace.

WHILE Schumann wrote his major piano works, he lived in just such a state of unsatisfied eagerness. A reluctant law student who preferred to improvise at the keyboard; a possible sufferer from syphilis who, according to one prescription, regularly soaked his hands in the abdominal cavity of a freshly slaughtered animal ("I am afraid lest something of the animal's nature may get into my own"); a lover of Clara Wieck, whose father, Schumann's one-time teacher, so opposed the courtship he slandered his daughter and fought the lovers in court—these were the elements of Schumann's darker autobiographical carnival. As counterpoint to the struggles of the life was Schumann's aesthetic conflict: *Davidbündler-*

tänze is not only an allusion to Schumann's secret love, (it was "abound with wedding thoughts," he told Clara) but a declaration of war. The league of David was Schumann's fantastical league of musicians, doing battle, in the final dance, against the aesthetic Philistines. The composer carried on that battle in some of the first publicly written music criticism, often signed by "Florestan" or "Eusebius." It was sharply aligned along progressive aesthetic lines. The "unsatisfied eagerness" and "enigmatic dream" was part of this aesthetic stance. It later came to define the movement known as the "avant-garde," linked in its origins to Romantic sensibility.

SO IT was no accident that after the resolution of his most personal struggles, after he gave up law for music, gave up piano performance for composition, and won the hand of Clara, the need for masks and carnivals decreased, as did the quantity of his piano composition. Beginning in 1840 there were the songs, the symphonies, episodes of great musical sincerity, fewer outbursts of genius. The personal voice of the piano and its link to Schumann's enigmatic desire was almost put aside.

But all of this poses an unusual problem for the player of this early piano music. The music was a protection and a mask, which was always in danger of slipping; a means of doing battle, but deliberately cryptic about what it was fighting for; a turning of the bourgeois world into carnival, viewed from both fascination and solitude. But remarkably, this music contains, as Barthes astutely noted, no overt conflict. Schumann's music is not a narrative exploration of tensions, like the classical sonata; it is not based on harmonic or melodic oppositions. It expresses a particular condition, one which resists easy characterization.

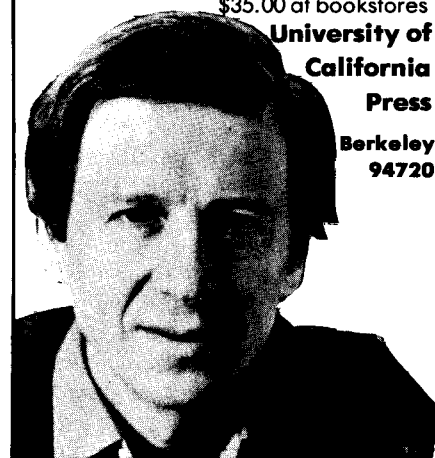
Two recent recordings have partly succeeded in offering a coherent style for this music, sketching an outline of this unusual figure. Charles Rosen's new recordings of Schumann, "The Revolutionary Masterpieces" (Nonesuch 79062) include six works—*Davidbündlertänze*, *Kreisleriana*, *Carnaval*, the *Fantasie*, the Sonata in F Sharp Minor, and *Impromptus on a Theme of Clara Wieck*. These are also the works—all written before Schumann was 30—which mark what Mr. Rosen calls a "revolution in piano style." Mr. Rosen

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returns to Schumann's original editions, which he believes reveal more effectively the power of the composer's imagination, unsullied by later second thoughts; most differences are minor, but the early *Fantasie*, for example, titled *Dichtungen*, contains a tantalizing return to the first movement theme on the work's final page.

Mr. Rosen, who possesses an uncommon insight into the scores he plays, has occasionally been criticized as an "intellectual" pianist. And he also, occasionally, becomes overly earnest, giving the lightest of gestures a hard edge, as in this *Carnaval*. But in the *Dauidsbündlertänze*, for example, Mr. Rosen mixes his analytical sensibility with personal affection, as if he were speaking of and to himself, not as a professional, but as a literal amateur. And the Sonata performance is articulate, lyrical, determinedly impassioned. In these performances, the composer's ambivalent melancholy and severe ambitions begin to become musically plausible. In a very different way Maurizio Pollini presents the Symphonic Etudes (Deutsche Grammophon 410 916-1) in a virtuosically stunning performance, delicate and forceful at once, the physical energies opening a strange shadowy world of the spirit, much as the composer must have imagined.

BUT WE still have great difficulty today re-creating Schumann's sensibility; there is little satisfaction to be had with Schumann performances. We should be so much closer to the composer's attitudes, which often anticipate modernity. We are, after all, the heirs of Schumann's irony, his masks, his interior desires, and avant-garde proclamations. When I told a friend of my disgruntlement with contemporary performances, he suggested I hear Alfred Cortot play Schumann. And on an EMI disc (GR-70019, imported from Japan) recorded in 1935, the pianist turns *Kinderszenen*, *Papillons*, and *Kreisleriana* into remarkable melancholy explorations of the carnival spirit; sympathy can be heard even in the piano tone. That sympathy, looking behind the masks of the music to find its beating heart, is not all that common, particularly given the urge in modern playing for impersonal earnest articulation and overwrought expressions of "personality." Cortot makes it seem as if this music is his world, not just Schumann's;

he speaks with a coherent voice.

But I remain happiest when stumbling through the music myself, giving it sound, slightly embarrassed at eavesdropping on its private universe, yet also surprised how intoxicating it is and how threatening. It is, when played in solitude, far from comforting. Though many of the conflicts of Schumann's early years had passed by the time he was in his mid-40s, the image of masquerade returned in more macabre form: Schumann went mad. He was in-

stitutionalized, unable to distinguish the mask from the real, the carnival from the ordinary world. Clara told of one night in 1854:

Robert got up and wrote down a melody which, he said, the angels had sung to him. Then he lay down again and talked deliriously the whole night, staring at the ceiling all the time. When morning came, the angels transformed themselves into devils and sang horrible music, telling him he was a sinner and that they were going to cast him into hell.

Critical theory meets the comics.

CAPTAIN MARVEL ON CAPITALISM

BY STEFAN KANFER

MY FAVORITE exchange between director and actor occurred more than half a century ago. Q: "How shall I play this scene, Mr. Chaplin?" A: "Behind me and to the left."

The dialogue aptly summarized the star's idea of motivation and neatly encapsulated his sentimental politics of the period. By now it should have been relegated to the Silver Screen edition of Trivial Pursuit. But no; it has apparently been taken as the motto of a new series of chapbooks, called *Beginners* manuals, published by an organization called Writers and Readers. In this case the part of Chaplin is played by the title. The part of the actor is taken by the contents.

Posing as "Documentary Comic Books," the *Beginners* series bills itself as "an attempt to bring words and images together and to translate the most complicated information into a simple, readable and amusing story." Well, no one can quarrel with the first adjective. The grammar, for example, is on the Captain Marvel level: "Originally intended for the uninitiated, experts from all over the world have come to admire and use the series." The accompanying art is a lateral descendant of graffiti: vast smudges, unacknowledged reproduc-

tions or rip-offs of Tenniel, Leonardo, Magritte, Grosz, and others, and ham-handed caricatures. But, in a sense, it fits the narrative. "Prophet or Cassandra?" asks *Orwell for Beginners*. (Never mind that Cassandra *was* a prophet; it was just that nobody listened to her.)

Between the covers, designed to resemble recycled shirt cardboard, the text follows the career of Eric Blair. The dates are exact, but the writings are made to fit *Beginners'* biases and preconceptions. Nothing exceptional in that; the Orwell oeuvre has been sifted and assayed violently since his death, and in 1984 his most famous volume was claimed for all sides, from anarchists to Reaganites. Indeed, one biographer, Raymond Williams, feels that despite his British apologetics during World War II, Orwell "remained a democratic socialist [who] gave most of his energies to the defense of civil liberties over a wide front." Another, George Woodcock, finds that "Orwell's vision of socialism could be stated simply as Tolstoy's vision of Christianity."

But *Orwell for Beginners* will have no truck with ambiguities. Not even the Crystal Spirit can stay its pamphleteering. Against a gross caricature of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the manual states:

"In his bleakest moods, when he contemplated the prospect of war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., Orwell did some-

Stefan Kanfer is a senior editor at *Time* magazine.

times embrace a form of nationalism—*siding with the U.S.* [italics theirs]. There is a terrible irony in this, since Orwell knew perfectly that a U.S. victory would lead to a world empire just as surely as a Soviet victory. Subsequent history—aggressive support for Fascist and near Fascist regimes around the world—bears this out.

Maybe. But it's hard to swallow a thesis that goes on to say that "Lenin and Trotsky were liberators as well as dictators, with an ultimate tendency that remains uncertain." Since Lenin once confided that liberty was "indeed precious—so precious that it has to be rationed," and Trotsky declared that "Terror as the demonstration of the will and strength of the working class is historically justified," I wonder at what point the tendency *could* be ascertained. When Afghanistan returns to its unoccupied state?

ECOLOGY for *Beginners*, written by a Briton living in Sweden, continues to drive, wobbily, on the left. Again history is given the Procrustean treatment, truncated or distended according to whim. After a brisk run through the Neolithic period, old Civilization and Early Industrialism, *Beginners* takes aim at its favorite target: "Starting with George Washington in 1779 the U.S. government had long used environmental destruction as a weapon to subdue the Indians." This is accompanied by an illustration of a squaw and papoose. A balloon emanating from both of them states, "We treated nature with humility and respect." The benighted beginner, or victim, is then taken in hand by Writers and Readers (I see them as the apotheosis of selective morality—Sidney and Beatrice Webb in jeans) and whisked away from dioramas showing Indians cutting down forests to get their hands on chestnuts, or slaughtering herds of buffalo just like the white man. (Cf. Evan Connell's scholarly *Son of the Morning Star* for such unflattering revelations about the Plains tribes when they were not skirmishing with Yellow Hair.)

True, many American generals were genocidal in the Indian wars, but for *Beginners Books* it is not enough to find a Great Satan. They must also have a saint. Invariably, the devil is played by the ravaging West; and martyrs are provided by the Third World. It must deliver "Sugar for the sweet Western tooth, Tea & coffee for Western drinkers, To-

bacco for Western smokers, Cut flowers for Western vases, Peanuts for Western parties." But, the volume inquires, "if the Earth's resources belong to all of us is there a way of sharing them out fairly?" A statue of Karl Marx replies, "Without international socialism—I doubt it." A live character beneath him adds, "And love." And with that riposte we are abruptly segued back to the 1960s, again ready for revolt, newly assured that what emerges from the barrel of a gun is not only power but daffodils.

Darwin for Beginners by Jonathan Miller and Borin Van Loon (Pantheon, 176 pp., \$4.95)

Capitalism for Beginners by Robert Lekachman and Borin Van Loon (Pantheon, 174 pp., \$4.95)

Ecology for Beginners by Stephen Croall and William Rankin (Pantheon, 175 pp., \$3.95)

Freud for Beginners by Richard Appignanesi and David Zarate (Pantheon, 174 pp., \$4.95)

Nuclear Power for Beginners by Stephen Croall and Kaianders (Pantheon, 148 pp., \$3.95)

Orwell for Beginners by David Smith and Michael Mosher (Norton, 160 pp., \$4.95)

Food for Beginners by Susan George and Nigel Paige (Norton, 173 pp., \$4.95)

Nicaragua for Beginners by Rius (Norton, 157 pp., \$5.95)

Medicine for Beginners by Richard Pinchuck and Richard Clark (Norton, 173 pp., \$4.95)

At the finale, the tinted steam of Ivan Illich moves in. People need "the freedom to make things among which they can live, or give shape to them according to their own tastes, and to put them to use in caring about others." On the last page, *Ecology for Beginners* finally offers its platform for radical change: "Let human needs and ecological care shape production and lifestyles! Meaningful work, a reasonable living standard and a clean environment for all! Conservation of energy and raw materials!"

Because this trio can be found in such breakthrough pamphlets as the Boy Scout Manual and *National Geographic*, I suggest the beginner bypass this volume and head for *Medicine for*

Beginners. For high-pitched screeds, four out of five doctors prefer this one. After the customary trot, this time from Hippocrates to the 20th century, the narrator and artist put on rubber gloves and commence the operation. Two archvillains appear, dressed in plutocratic costume: John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, founded in 1901, "was devoted to laboratory medicine and producing gentleman doctors." Soon after, the Carnegie Foundation surveyed medical schools. The end result: fewer doctors were needed and, the book continues in bumper sticker style, the establishment demanded BLACKS OUT, WOMEN OUT, POOR OUT. But in a few pages these groups have managed to enter the medical community. Carnegie and Rockefeller are dead. Where can malefactors be found? Why, in the West, of course. Flashback: "Before Western expansion, smallpox was unknown in much of the world. In the United States, for example, it was used as a potent weapon by sending Indians contaminated clothing or blankets. Not having previously encountered it, the Indians had no resistance to the disease." (That a Westerner named Edward Jenner developed smallpox vaccine in 1796 is not germane to the narrative.) Moreover, "It is widely assumed today that Third World diseases have always been endemic . . . yet before colonization African farmers controlled tse tse flies which carry [sleeping sickness] by keeping their shrubland breeding-ground at bay. Colonialism depleted the rural population. With insufficient labor to cut back the shrub, the flies moved in."

FOR READERS who can handle a text with more than ten lines to the page and language that does not require a circle around it, I quote the Columbia History of the World: "In diseased areas of Africa draft animals cannot be used. Until the coming of mechanical transport in modern times, the only way to cross most of the continent was to walk, carrying one's belongings on one's head." To *Beginners Books*, this is obviously the only way to travel. To the rest of humanity, however, the Land Rover and insecticides, First World though they may be, provide sane alternatives to short life expectancy and a universe no larger than the near horizon.

Medicine ends with a whiff of ether: the way around the AMA is, the book insists, "Holism." And what is that, class? "You can't really define Holism," says a diagram of Yin and Yang. "To define Holism is unholistic. The whole is more than the sum of its parts." Yes. Well. After a deep dreamless sleep we stretch, yawn, and turn to the pages of some other *Beginners*, careful not to inhale. *Capitalism for Beginners*, written by Robert Lekachman, is cannier and far less muzzy than its companions. Still, it too features the statue of Marx spouting a commercial: "Where does 'abundance' come from? Always, always, from the ability of capitalism to squeeze profits from the market. Where else?" And the alternative to avarice? The punch line is delivered sans balloon: "The self-interest of those who live by their labor requires replacement of capitalism by democratic socialism."

Nuclear Power for Beginners is a standard, and quite cogent, No Nukes textbook most of the way. Then it suddenly introduces Marx and Engels in a fictive exchange. Marx: "If I had known about fast breeders I might have had second thoughts." Engels: "Anyway, Marxism is not just a theory . . . it's a weapon to be constantly sharpened and used in new ways." One of the ways, I suppose, is this *Beginners* textbook. It features a large map of the United States with indications of nuclear power reactors. I looked in vain for a similar picture of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, but perhaps the authors ran out of space. After all, as Engels said in some balloon or other, all things have boundaries—even books.

And so do critiques. It should be noted that the restless Jonathan Miller has written a plausible *Darwin for*

Beginners, although it contains nothing that a standard textbook or television special has not previously discussed; and *Freud for Beginners*, by Richard Appignanesi, is excellent for the advanced 14-year-old bright enough to want definitions of the id, the ego, and the superego, and immature enough to break up at the sight of a cardinal, and a penis dressed as a man, accusing Freud:

showing a fat white woman eating Africa, or North America with a straw sipping South America dry. U.S. aid is portrayed as a Trojan horse; agronomists, scientists, and nutritionists are warned that they can only make "a real contribution if they're willing to unlearn 90 per cent of what they've been taught and start from scratch with an open and curious mind." It would be

interesting to learn which 90 percent is to be jettisoned: the stuff about vitamin deficiency? The knowledge of crop rotation? Genetic engineering of seeds? Alternatives to petroleum-based fertilizers? It is hard to say. *Food for Beginners'* solution only states that "A First World support group for the Third World social and political change movement must be modest." In other words, let the eternal return take its course; everything recurs if we wait long enough—even isolationism in its latest guise.

If I were a librarian I would have a difficult time deciding where to shelve these volumes. The children's section? But they are too full of concepts and categories for the very young. The adult area? But the only grown-ups these are fit for are those who believe in political simplicities and pictorial bromides. The books are harmless enough, in general,

and many of them include a bibliography of real books in the back for those who don't move their lips when they look at drawings. Perhaps the best thing would be to set them beside the picture of Laura Marx in the official *Marx for Beginners Diary*, along with her husband's letter describing himself as "a machine condemned to devour books and then throw them, in a changed form, on the dunghill of history." Good old Karl. Now there was a man who knew what to do with beginners.



FROM FOOD FOR BEGINNERS.

"For you everything is sexual!"

As for works like *Nicaragua for Beginners*, the text consists chiefly of righteous slogans: "towns leveled; relocation camps; indiscriminate bombing; mass executions; rape and pillage (The American Way of Death) . . . corruption is the sine qua non of capitalism. . . ." *Food for Beginners*, like its siblings, adumbrates some horrific abuses of land and resources by Europeans and Americans, but squanders most of its energy in photomontages

MAIDEN VOYAGE

The Finishing School

by Gail Godwin

(Viking, 336 pp., \$16.95)

The "finishing school" is in fact an old stone hut by a pond in Clove township, upstate New York, where at the beginning of her 15th year and over the course of an extraordinary summer, Justin Stokes comes of age. The agent who plants formative aspirations within her is Ursula DeVane, an unmarried woman of 44 who—with her reclusive brother Julian, a talented concert pianist reduced to giving lessons to neighborhood children—lives in her father's old house and grounds, selling off his acres as economic necessity directs. By contrast with Ursula's rootedness, Justin has been painfully uprooted. Her own father recently dead, she has been wrenched from the established routines of a comfortable home in Virginia and relocated in the unfamiliar and largely unappealing confines of Lucas Meadows—a small community most of whose members work for IBM, eight miles away in Kingston, New York.

Justin, her mother, and younger brother live with her aunt Mona and cousin Becky in a house which is, alas, everything Ursula DeVane's is not (it has seafoam wall-to-wall carpeting in the living room, protected by clear plastic runners leading to the various sitting places). Aunt Mona has redone Justin's room for her in what the girl, with a sense of the aesthetically trashy, has intolerantly dubbed "Raspberry Ice." Within its confines, lonely and yearning for her lost past and her as yet uncertain future, Justin reaches out in imagination to the freedom, the cultural style, which Ursula comes increasingly to embody.

These are some of the materials which Gail Godwin in her sixth novel (she has also published two collections of shorter fiction) has woven into an engaging, shapely narrative of cumulative power. There is nothing unfamiliar in her material. At least since Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, in the relationship of that other Ursula with her "beloved, subtly-intimate teacher" Winifred Inger, we have had literary treatments of the love between aspiring girl and mature, "ad-

vanced" woman (Winifred Inger is interested in the "Women's Movement"). Gail Godwin writes with none of the steamy abandon Lawrence lavishes on Ursula and Winifred's nocturnal swim together (although her Ursula does attempt, without success, to get Justin to swim with her in "their" pond), and her narrative voice is much more carefully modulated than Lawrence's eventually monotonous and rather external presentation. Godwin creates nuance and variety by making Justin speak through different voices: the fulfilled actress she has become, now haunted by a moment from her past and meditating upon it; but also the young Justin, speaking to us from present urgency, having fallen under the spell of a powerful woman. Yet this young Justin also recalls a younger one, as events from her previous life in Virginia with grandparents, father, and mother are reviewed. Some words of hers from the novel describe well its technique:

In following the natural flow of my memories as they leap forward, then draw back, then leap forward again, I am digressing from what I want to do most. I want to go back and claim the girl I was—the girl Ursula DeVane chose for her special friend, that summer in Clove. I want to take myself through the summer as it unfolded, no conscious lies or glossings-over, but only the wisdom of retrospect.

But interestingly enough such wisdom is exactly what the novel shows to be impossible, or at least emptily abstract and pious in character. To believe in its secure attainment is to exhibit a naiveté comparable to that revealed at one moment in the book when Justin, looking at her youthful face and body in the mirror, and with a sense of her whole life ahead, tells us that

it seemed perfectly possible to me . . . that with resolution and a little prudent foresight—and from learning from the example of people like Ursula—I could get through life without ever committing any act that would haunt me later.

This delusory hope the novel exposes, yet does so in a way that is free from

gloating or heavy-handed irony. John Updike says in his memoir, *The Dogwood Tree*, that in maturity he found no certain substitutes for the misguided assumptions of childhood. In a similar manner, *The Finishing School* shows the wisdom of retrospect to be no more sustaining or invulnerable to attack than the "prudent foresight" of youth.

There are various stylistic means by which Gail Godwin refuses to overinvest in any single, "true" point of view or nugget of meaning. As the narrative leaps forward and draws back, as the narrator shifts from one age-perspective to another, events recur and are retold with different emphasis, and by way of making our awareness more complicated. Rather than presenting the young Justin's experience in a relatively direct way, her older self overlays it with all the qualifications and hesitations of alternative ways of talking:

As I review these memories in painstaking detail, trying to see what was true and not flinch from those truths, I've even speculated whether my "possessed" behavior toward Ursula was a semiconsciously contrived ploy on my part to make my mother see that she ought to have taken me away from Clove. But no, that's going too far; that would make me a monster, like little Mary Tilford in *The Children's Hour* who wrecks a school and the lives of two women in order to keep from being sent back to the school. I was not a monster—not that kind of monster, anyway. I told no lies: I even kept from my mother the extent of my preoccupation with Ursula. I loved Ursula more than my mother that summer, and I didn't want my mother to know it.

And so on, giving somewhat the effect of Eliot's notion of ironic wit as "a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible."

YET IT would be wrong to overstress the complications and difficulty of this novel, since it is distinguished throughout by a lucid and unpretentious gravity of speech, its narrative voice giving us confidence as it conveys—in Lionel Trilling's useful formulation—"both the modulation and the living form of what is being said." This is, quite simply, a voice one likes and trusts, and it lives just as convincingly in the incidental details of place and person as in larger and more thematic concerns. For example, the

voice is filled with IBM lore ("I've Been Moved" as the quip has it), attaching itself to the Kingston and Poughkeepsie operations of that company. (One instance: Thomas J. Watson Sr., visiting the men's room at the Poughkeepsie site, found an employee disregarding the "Please Wash Hands Before Returning To Work" sign. When the founder of IBM asked the employee why he ignored the sign, the man explained that "I'm not going back to work, I'm going to lunch.") The portrait of Justin's fat friend Joan, who invites her for a swim in her swimming pool but declines to participate herself ("You just swim all you want," she said in her mild, uninflected voice, "and I'll sit up here under the umbrella and watch you"—and so she does, in her "jumbo-sized suit"), is humorous and even poignant, without a trace of clever "satiric" narrative showing-off. So is the portrait of "Mott"—Justin's aunt's ex-spouse (and an IBMer), who unknowingly precipitates the book's painful denouement. There is a thoroughly believable and sympathetic account of Justin's first Broadway show, which turns out to be, luckily for her, *My Fair Lady*. And, appropriate to a book the sound of whose narrative voice is crucial, there are delicately noted bits of music, played splendidly (or butchered) by Ursula's brother

(or his pupils): Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata; Liszt's "Mephisto Waltz"; Chopin's B Flat Scherzo; "Happy Birthday to You" and "Dixie."

"That is the power of the artist, you see," says Ursula to the young Justin: "If you are an artist you learn how to trap the yearning and put it where you want it, put it where it goes. That's the secret all true artists come to know." Gail Godwin has learned the secret and trapped it in this, her best novel. Shorter and more tightly controlled than the overlong though often absorbing *A Mother and Two Daughters*, *The Finishing School* develops the first person voice used in her novella "Mr. Bedford" (in *Mr. Bedford and the Muses*) into a narrative of humanly impressive energies, as happy-sad in its texture as life itself may be said to be. Its sympathies and ironies are equally directed at all, irrespective of age or sex, and it is wholly empty of rancor or shrillness or mean-mindedness. For those reasons it helps us, as Wallace Stevens said poetry should do, to live our lives.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

William H. Pritchard is the author, most recently, of *Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered* (Oxford).

history. It sharply marked off Iran from the Sunni Ottoman Empire. It gave Iran a distinctive political culture, in which political protest has frequently been expressed in the vocabulary of Islam. Moreover, although Arjomand confines his comments on the recent Islamic revolution in Iran to a seven-page epilogue, the evolving relationship between the political and religious institution that he describes, and its doctrinal foundations, resonate with relevance for the Iran of our day.

THE Safavids were founders of a militant Sufi order, originally based in Ardabil, in Iran, which later spread to Anatolia. They owed their impressive military conquests to the power of their religious message and to their zealous Turkoman followers, who ascribed semi-divine attributes to their Safavid leaders.

Shah Isma'il was considered to be an incarnation of the Godhead or, at the very least, the representative of the Hidden Imam, the Mahdi or "Lord of Time," whose advent would establish the rule of justice and equity. Such claims were played down under later Safavid rulers. But the messianic streak was never far below the surface. Safavid kings maintained a team of horses, at least one always harnessed, in the "stable of the Lord of the Age," awaiting the imminent return of the Mahdi.

The doctrine of the Hidden Imam is a central tenet of Twelver Shi'ism. Twelver Shi'ites believe that the leadership of the community after the death of the prophet devolved on his son-in-law Ali, and through him on a succession of divinely guided, infallible Imams. The Twelfth Imam occulted in the ninth century; it is his return that is eagerly awaited. Rightful rule is believed to belong to the Hidden Imam alone and, in his absence, to his designated deputy. The Safavids claimed to be exercising a vice-regency on behalf of the Hidden Imam, their reign being but a preliminary to his. From time to time, Shi'ite jurists put forward a counter claim, that the true vice-regency belongs not to kings but to the *mujtahids*, those trained in Islamic law.

Scholars of Iran have long held that the doctrine of the Hidden Imam in Shi'ism tends ultimately to render all secular government illegitimate. Arjomand sets out to demolish this view. He also wishes to discredit the argument that Twelver Shi'ite doctrine

WHAT THE AYATOLLAH FORGOT

The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam:
Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in
Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890
by Said Amir Arjomand

(University of Chicago Press, 356 pp., \$28)

On a Friday in the fall of 1501, according to a contemporary chronicle, Shah Isma'il Safavi, the new ruler of Iran, went to the congregational mosque in the city of Tabriz. He ordered the preacher to mount the pulpit and to read the sermon. "The king himself," the chronicle continues, "proceeded to the front of the pulpit, unsheathed the sword of the Lord of Time, may peace be upon him, and stood there like the shining sun." Thus, in an atmosphere of religious messianism and shrewd po-

litical calculation, began the 220-year reign of the Safavids in Iran. It is this close identity of religion and state, and its ramifications in the four centuries that followed the coming of the Safavids, that is the subject of Said Amir Arjomand's informative and intelligent book. And well it might be.

The establishment of a Shi'ite state in Iran, with Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion, was a momentous event, and its particular form was almost unique in the annals of Islamic

makes its religious leaders particularly prone to involvement in political affairs. He rightly points out that for long stretches of history, Shi'ite religious leaders accommodated themselves to political authority; that the theory of "occultation" of the Twelfth Imam was developed in part to avoid friction with rulers and to explain why, after Ali, the Imams did not rule; that Shi'ite jurists over the centuries have either advised quiescence and withdrawal from worldly affairs, or they have urged service to rulers, in the interest of social order and the advancement of Islamic law.

Rebellion against an oppressor was discouraged. A statement attributed to the Eighth Imam, Ali al-Reza, and quoted by Arjomand, reads: "Verily, he who stands up against a tyrannical ruler, and a calamity befalls him, shall have no reward for it." The 11th-century jurist Sharif al-Morteza considered it obligatory to accept judgeships, even from an unjust ruler, if this permitted enforcement of the sacred law in the name of the Hidden Imam.

Arjomand argues that the doctrine of the Hidden Imam was therefore a formula for quiescence, not political action. It expressed "an order of reality

and relevance distinct from mundane politics." It was "a utopian substitute for political theory," "devoid of direct implications for political rule." By relegating the reign of the Lord of Time to some indeterminate future, the doctrine served to legitimate, not to challenge, political authority. By the same token, the assertion that true vice-regency belongs to the *mujtahids*, he argues, remained a theoretical formulation rather than a serious claim to political authority.

Arjomand thus regards the intertwining of political and religious authority under the early Safavids as an aberration, implying "the abeyance of sacred law" and rendering "the Islamic normative order inoperative." In a sense his book is an account of the gradual differentiation and separation of the religious from the political institution, and a slow reversion to a condition more in keeping with what he describes as the "normative logic" of Twelver Shi'ism.

The separation of the religious and political spheres began already under the Safavids. In the interests of stability the unruly millenarian elements had to be brought under control. The claim of Shah Isma'il to be divinely guided ap-

peared less convincing after he was defeated by the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514. As the men of religion developed a hierarchy, elaborated doctrines, and expanded their network of mosques and seminaries, the religious institution became increasingly distinct from the state.

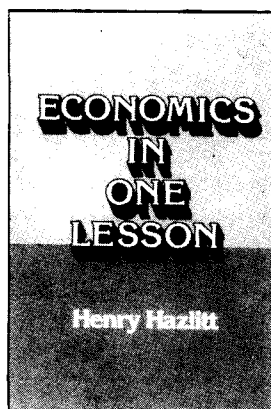
A critical element in this process, according to Arjomand, was a conflict that developed within the clerical community. At the time of the Safavid takeover, Iran was predominantly Sunni. Legend has it that in all of Tabriz only one book could be found expounding Shi'ite doctrine. The great centers of Shi'ite learning were located outside Iran, primarily in Karak and Jabal Amil in Syria. It was from these areas (and later from Bahrain) that the Safavids brought in teachers to propound the new faith.

The existing religious estate, Arjomand tells us, was composed of men drawn from families of local notables. They had strong local roots, held land, and carried out a number of administrative tasks on behalf of the government. They ran the religious endowments, the seminaries, and the religious courts. They dispensed justice and handled

"(Hazlitt) is one of the few economists in history who could really write."

—H.L. MENCKEN

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funds designated for religious purposes. The newcomers, on the other hand, were characterized by a "markedly different" cultural outlook. They "lacked a similarly broad legal, administrative, financial and political base," having served only as advisers to Shi'ite

minorities in matters of ritual, dogma, and sacred law. The incumbents had received a broad education, in rhetoric, mathematics, philosophy, logic, astronomy, and literary style, as well as religion; the newcomers were trained within the more narrow confines of

the strictly religious sciences. The existing clerics were "world-embracers"; the newcomers were typically "world-rejectors." The incumbents were worldly men; the newcomers were "religious professionals."

In the ensuing struggle for primacy, Arjomand says, it was the newcomers who triumphed. They penetrated the mosque network and achieved dominance in the teachings of the religious sciences in the seminaries. They trained generations of students in their narrow outlook. They elaborated certain concepts, such as that of *ijtihad*, or the exercise of reason in the interpretation of Islamic law, and of *taqlid*, or emulation, which required a believer to follow the guidance of one more learned in matters pertaining to Islamic law, in a manner that enhanced the position of the jurists. They crushed a nascent renaissance of philosophy and gnosticism among the members of the old religious establishment. They developed a populist Shi'ism, rooted in ritual, prayer, saint-worship, pilgrimage, and the like, that kept the masses in thrall to their religious leaders.

AT THE beginning of the Safavid era, Arjomand concludes, there existed a "complex of financial, legal, education, and religious institutions" with the potential "of being unified into a 'religious institution' incorporated into the Safavid state, as were its counterparts in the Ottoman Empire." What emerged instead was a religious institution largely separate from the state and standing outside it.

This process intensified in the period of disorder following the collapse of the Safavids in 1722 and preceding the rise of the Qajars late in the 18th century. In the absence of a strong central authority, the clerics learned to depend on charitable contributions from the mass of believers. The *usuli* school developed the concepts of *ijtihad*, *taqlid*, and the vice-regency of the jurists in ways that greatly strengthened the authority of the clerical community. Qajar kings made no claim to religious authority, and needed the legitimacy that the religious leaders could confer.

In the first half of the 19th century, the jurist Seyyed Ja'far Kashfi revived the concept of a "divided vice-regency," in which rulers and *mujtahids*, the men of the sword and the men of learning, each served as the "specified deputy" of the Hidden

GEOMETRY AND SEA AIR

It took two days at the beach this spring
for me to remember these two or three things.
First, the body is two-thirds of the way

towards being the selfless thing
that contains both the dead and the fishes.
We're almost home—if we mean that place

that we left under duress and now no longer exists
for us to return to, the endless horizontal
without that underworld or otherworldly axis to fix us.

We're exiles, I remembered, we're in some portion
Armenian, and although the body is not the sea,
the sea can be, actually, wine-dark, brilliant, a pedant

in the way it belabors every single point
it touches the way Proust would belabor
the steeples of the churches in Comray

how they were one day a brown velvet
and the next a jagged flint or flame
but finally something ordinary

and intoxicating, yet an utter authority
of light and bulk like the ocean, nothing trimmed
of its possibility, unafraid of what it is.

It is the second thing—
the prescription given to Keats
on his last voyage from Gravesend

to Naples—*Geometry & Sea Air*
to put a little ballast in your life—
that I remember in the way I sometimes

wish myself away—to give Keats,
for instance, my lungs; to give my marrow
to make blood in turn in the bones

of a friend. That's an oceanic wish,
a happy obliteration—to give every word
for something that works, one word

for one flesh, a calculus of remembering,
a ballast of all the fluids, a ship come in,
the gift of something.

BRUCE SMITH

Imam, respectively in the political and religious spheres. In this concept of separate, if mutually dependent, spheres, according to Arjomand, there is a reversion to the "normative logic" of Twelver Shi'ism. In the reign of the second Qajar ruler, Fath Ali Shah, when the state and the religious institution co-existed in an environment of mutual respect but clearly demarcated authority, the Shi'ite view of the relationship between state and religion, he says, achieved "as close an institutional translation as it was ever likely to have."

YET clerics in the 19th century displayed a propensity to intervene in politics, often on major issues and with far-reaching consequences. It was primarily pressure from religious leaders that led Fath Ali Shah into his second war with Russia, with disastrous results. Protests in 1891-92 led largely by religious leaders, resulted in the cancellation of a tobacco monopoly granted by Nasser ad-Din Shah to an English company. Clerics were prominent in the movement that led to the granting of a constitution in 1906. In the first half of the century, Mohammad Baqer Shafi'i, a populist clerical leader, operating through his own corps of *lutis*, or urban toughs, for a time practically had a free run of the city of Isfahan.

For Arjomand the explanation lies, paradoxically, in the very separation of the religious and political spheres, the emergence of the religious institution as a separate center of power and the consequent propensity of religious leaders to intervene in political affairs; in the tendency of later Qajar rulers to dispense with the blessings and support of the religious authorities; and, finally, in an external factor. "Nothing from within Shi'ism," he writes, "threatened the stability of the dual structure of domination [i.e. of religious and political authority] in the reconstituted Shi'ite polity of pre-modern Iran. The threat came from without: in the form of imperialist penetration, and the impact of the West on the modernization of the state." The clerics began to interfere in politics when they felt that the ruler was not fulfilling his duty to protect Islam and the community from foreign interference and the contamination of foreign ways.

The strength of this analysis lies in its historical perspective, its firm grounding in the doctrinal literature of the ju-

rists, and its attempt at a broad analytical framework. Arjomand is able to show that there was change in the relationship between the religious institution and the state in both the Safavid and Qajar period. We are in his debt for having combed the biographical dictionaries to come up with a "profile" of the clerical hierarchy under the Safavids, and for his valuable work, much of it not previously undertaken, on the Shi'ite doctrinal literature pertaining to political authority.

Arjomand's analysis, however, also presents a number of difficulties. The distinction he attempts to draw between the men of religion already in Iran and the incoming Shi'ite teachers and jurists in the early Safavid period is not as sharp as he would wish, and there is no clean "fit" between the supposed "world-embracers" of one camp and the "world-rejectors" of the other. Al-Karaki, a leading figure among the early newcomers, was also committed to involving the clerics in judicial and administrative affairs. There were "world-rejectors" in both camps. On specific questions, individual jurists seem to stand now on one side, now on the other, of the divide.

Indeed, on Arjomand's own evidence, distinctions and divisions are everywhere more blurred than his conclusions would suggest. Relations between the state and the religious institution change, but not in a direct line of development. There are many zigs and zags; old positions are abandoned only to be taken up again; many developments that Arjomand terms "momentous" turn out to be less decisive than at first supposed.

Arjomand is right to emphasize that Shi'ite jurists were more often in the business of legitimizing than of delegitimizing secular rulers. Yet the doctrine of the Hidden Imam remained a sword that could cut both ways. The "normative logic" of Twelver Shi'ism may imply a certain separation between the religious and the political spheres. But Arjomand can never quite make up his mind whether this required the men of religion to withdraw from practical affairs or to involve themselves actively in education, judicial administration and the application of law to everyday transactions.

There appears to have been not a single "normative logic" in the Twelver Shi'ite attitude to the state, good for all

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time and different historical circumstances. Rather, it embraced a whole spectrum of often contradictory traditions, theories, and modes of action for jurists and believers to choose from. Arjomand himself somewhere makes this point, but slides over it, defines the "normative logic" of Twelver Shi'ism too narrowly. Claims by rulers to divinity and by Islamic jurists to the right to rule represented extreme, if not unprecedented, positions. But these were not the only points at which the religious and the political institutions could come into conflict. One does not need the *deus ex machina* of imperialist penetration to explain why clerics in the 19th century should demand the ruler to ob-

serve certain rules and standards of behavior.

But never mind. Arjomand presents us with a wealth of new material. He is ready to tackle difficult issues. Even where we feel he has not got the Shi'ite attitude to the state quite right, he always teases us into thought and forces us to reexamine old assumptions. This book deserves to be read by anyone concerned with the relationship between religion and state in Iran and in Islam.

SHAUL BAKHASH

Shaul Bakhsh is the author of *The Reign of the Ayatollahs* (Basic Books).

THE HEART OF A HARD MAN

Otherwise: Last and First Poems of Eugenio Montale
translated from the Italian by Jonathan Galassi

(Vintage/Random House, 160 pp., \$14.95, \$8.95 paper)

For American readers of poetry who are without Italian, Montale (not Ferraro's running mate) is here illustrated, in uncollected early poems and uncollected late ones (with the Italian *en face*, just in case), as well as in Mr. Galassi's selection of the poet's essays published last year as *The Second Life of Art*—illustrated in two respects: as a lingering resonance and as a luminous example.

I shall take up later the matter of the resonance, or the resonance of the matter, for that is what we must come back to, the residue that constitutes what we mean when we refer to any poet's work by his name, the label on the spice-box, the concentrate, the taste. It will be easier to account for the example, though the resonance has been so pervasive that not even Lowell's convulsive versions of some years back could obscure what Montale sounds like; since then, Charles Wright, William Arrowsmith, and now Galassi have been more scrupulous and knowledgeable, if not quite so zesty. (James Merrill would be, on the showing of the 1962 Montale number of the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, the indicated translator).

It is easier, as I say, and essential too, to account first for the example, which I

call luminous because no other major poet of the century—not Valéry or Perse, not Eliot or Yeats, not Stevens or Frost, not George or Brecht—looms so honorably in the wars between inner life and outer, in the transactions between public power and private process. Only Mandelstam, perhaps, is so trustworthy a witness (*vide* martyr); and of course Montale's survival to the age of 85—Hardy alone continued to write poetry longer—adds some cubits to his stature. The example is all the finer for shining so inveterately, through so much murk.

Born in 1896 on Columbus Day—he too Genoese, though no seafarer—Montale is, like his contemporary Borges, with whom he shares so much else, one of the *grands seigneurs* of modernity. "I don't go looking for poetry, I wait to be visited," he has said, thereby instancing something of the aristocratic reticence I mean, the reserve which is so rare even among the great names I have already cited. Montale went public, as far as American readers are concerned, very late. After all, he had sounded his characteristic note by 1916, as far as *he* was concerned. How unlike D'Annunzio, to take the obvious Italian instance, who was so sensationally fa-

miliar to my parents' generation. (My mother was born on the same day as Montale, as it happens, and was a great D'Annunzian—our shelves were full of his dread novels in dreadful translations and of the plays he wrote for, or against, Duse.)

EVERYTHING about D'Annunzio was public, of course—his fictions, his plays, his career, his poeticalness—whereas Montale was utterly without a comparable theatricalizing impulse. In this, too, he is like Borges; no other major poet of the age, except, again, Mandelstam, seems so remote from self-advertisement. Though he studied to be an opera singer (bass), though he adored operetta and wrote a volume of music criticism (not contradictory impulses, necessarily), Montale seems never to have yearned to stage himself. No drama: he claims to have traversed the "innumerable small paths of the labyrinth without sustaining serious harm." He wrote a book of travel pieces and a lot of literary criticism, from which two years ago Galassi chose items most likely to appeal to the American reader, who should be warned that the considerable bulk or bearing of Montale's prose is of a very wide journalistic range and frequently distracting to a reader of the poetry, though it is heartening to learn that Montale "discovered" Svevo and enjoyed a creative literary rapport with all the important Italian writers of his time except Ungaretti. Then there is *The Butterfly of Dinard*, a volume of Borges-like "fictions," half-fable, half-memoir, translated into English by Professor G. S. Singh, Montale's most dauntless academic critic, in 1970. The rest is silence. And poetry.

His private life seems notable only for two or three events, if one can call them that—not so much happenings as attitudes toward history, stoic responses. He served as a lieutenant and saw combat in the First World War. He opposed the Fascist movement from the start and eventually lost his living for doing so. After publishing only four or five volumes of poems, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1975, though by this time he was the leading cultural critic for the leading Italian newspaper. I suppose we might add that he had married, at 35, a woman who had been the wife of a well-known art critic. (Montale himself was a gifted painter.) They had no children, and indeed "la Mosca" takes her

affecting place in his work only after her death, in the *Xenia* poems (1964-1967); other women in Montale's odes to love and loss are shadows, glimpses, scars. And we should note, too, that once the party removed him from his directorship of the Vieusseux Library in Florence in 1938, Montale made a sort of livelihood for a decade as a translator of American writers, as well as of the poems of Hopkins, Yeats, and Hardy, of five plays and the sonnets of Shakespeare, of Corneille and Cervantes. He signs off:

I recommend to my posterity (if there is to be any) in the literary world, the existence of which remains unlikely, to make a splendid bonfire out of whatever might concern my life, my events, my non-events . . .

THUS Montale's special resonance will not be recognizable from any sort of friction with his example—how much of their lover's quarrel with the world which has made the rhetoric of modern poets is passed over in silence by this Ligurian recluse! It is another dispute altogether that generates Montale's characteristic tone: "since from birth I have felt a total disharmony with the reality that surrounded me, the material of my inspiration could only be *that* disharmony." Further, besides the difference between the avowed Montale—the journalist, the Dante-lover, the senator-for-life: a frowning public man—and the private poet—eager even to mislead and misinform his tiny public rather than to give himself away—there is a great cleavage in the poet's formal comportment: in his last decade, Montale wrote almost as much poetry, or as many poems, as constituted the entire production of his first 50 years as a poet.

The later diaristic manner, relentlessly dismissive of the pressure of events, is represented very fully in this book, and Galassi provides a fine set of notes discussing the references and occasions which afford such unvarying dismissals and derogations their *raison d'être*. Galassi has been just as helpful in his notes concerning the very early work, poems so eager to wrest themselves free from the choking constraints of Italian period-style, either proclamatory or intimist, above or below the tension of the lyre. The characteristic intonation of the major Montale, of poems not in this book, is one of exact lyric pronouncement, a response to harsh land-

scape and inharmonious Eros which seems elusive only because it offers no explanatory matter, no filler. But this book as a whole constitutes an admirable way in, a sort of a sounding board whereby you can discover if you are going to like this poet, before attending to the more exigent, shapelier central volumes: *Cuttlefish Bones* of 1925, the even more astringent *Occasions* of 1939, *The Storm and Other Things* of 1956, and *Satura* of 1970.

Montale himself, always evasive and apotropaic in his stance, in his stanzas, seems to want to warn or even ward off the reader. It is quite possible that you will not find this poet immediately to your liking. As Cavafy, say, or Tsvetayeva, is immediately attractive. Here something has hardened or gone dry, even at the start, and the reader must brood over these poems awhile, must hold them under his tongue like a lemon drop, before they soften up, before they release their juice. But there is an accent, even here in this admittedly marginal book (with such a poet, the margin offers, at least, the sense of a beginning, an initiation), there is a savor which quickly becomes heartbreaking and irresistible:

. . . *il vento che nasce e muore
nell'ora che lenta s'annerà
suonasse te pure stasera
scordato strumento,
cuore.*

. . . the wind that is born and dies
in the hour that slowly darkens—
if only it could play you too tonight
untuned instrument,
heart.

The delayed fulfillment of the little quatrain which comes with the last word, obliging us to seek, for a moment, the "untuned" rhyme of *lenta* with *strumento* before we reach the word that too easily rhymes with "dies" in Italian, was written when Montale was 20. Galassi's translation is gallant in its resolve to sacrifice no "meaning" to mere euphony. The translator has no need of gallantry, however, with the looser notations written in the poet's 85th year, like "The Pupil of the Muses" which concludes:

What matters is that out of the seething
mass
something appears that says to us,
You don't know me, I don't know you;
and yet
it was our fate to have the divine madness

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of being here and not there, living or so we call it, my child. And now go and may your bag not be too tightly shut.

E non sia troppo chiuso il tuo bagaglio. It might be something of a liminal salute from the old poet, that notion. In any case, it is good to read over these musings, the old man's toys, as well as the early tribulations of the crystallizing poet, before turning to the two or three dozen of the century's best poems. "The Lemon Trees," "Café at Rapallo," "Arsenio," "Dora Markus," "The Eel," "Little Testament," "Xenia," and the "Motets" must be among them; it is enlivening to quarrel over the others.

"There can't be concentration until there has been diffusion," Montale says in one of his essays, and we may take him at his word as new readers of his *amaro stil nuovo*. Here is the wide net, the terminal reach, for which we owe Jonathan Galassi much gratitude. Then must come the great lyric poems, concentrations indeed, calculations in the old sense, an accumulation of hard stones used in an accounting. What is accounted for is life itself.

RICHARD HOWARD

Richard Howard is at work on a study of André Gide.

er, after Kennedy's death, it passed the Gun Control Act of 1968, which started out as comprehensive legislation but was watered down by the gun lobby—the National Rifle Association, an interest group that has two-and-a-half million ardent members. President Reagan supports it. He told a questioner at a press conference in 1983, "the criminal is going to find a way to have a gun." Farmers and sportsmen do not want their guns registered or taken away. The pro-gun lobby, Jervis Anderson explains in his book,

is one of the largest and best-financed special interest groups in the nation's capital. Made up of organizations of the far right . . . it regards all gun control advocates as "gun grabbers." . . . it has managed to exercise something resembling a veto over the desire that most Americans have expressed for stronger gun laws.

How do you account for President Reagan's alliance with the gun lobby after his near murder? Well, he doesn't like federal regulation. And the Second Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right of citizens "to keep and bear arms." It is true the Supreme Court interprets this as merely upholding the right of states to maintain a militia. Not so the gun buffs; they argue that it forbids federal interference. Mr. Reagan addressed the 112th annual convention of the NRA in May, 1983:

"It does my spirit good to be with people who never lose faith in America, who never stop believing in her future, and who never back down one inch from defending the constitutional freedoms that are every American's birthright," he said. It is not Reagan who is talking, it is Hannibal Chollop. He continues,

Being part of this group you know that good organizations don't just happen. They take roots in a body of shared beliefs. They grow from strong leadership, with vision, initiative, and determination to reach great goals. And what you've accomplished speaks for itself—more than two and a half million Americans, and NRA is growing stronger every day.

Mr. Reagan hailed the way the NRA defeated an attempt to control handguns. He casually referred to his own near-assassination and went on impersonally to upbraid those who want sterner gun laws: "Don't they understand that most violent crimes are not committed by decent, law-abiding citizens? They're committed by career criminals. Guns don't make criminals. Hard-core crimi-

PACKING HEAT

Guns in American Life by Jervis Anderson

(Random House, 127 pp., \$12.95)

I am inclined to think that nothing much will be done about the proliferation of handguns in America until another president is assassinated. It is a horrifying thought. Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, and Kennedy were murdered. Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan were wounded. Andrew Jackson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Gerald Ford were shot at. Puerto Rican nationalists gunned their way into Blair House intending to kill Truman. The record in America is worse than under many dictatorships and in other democracies. Here is a little book that mildly brings the story up to date.

Ten years ago I listened to Dr. Milton Eisenhower, the president's brother and head of the federal crime commission then, testify before Congress. He noted the shocking record and the many studies made of it and their pleas for reform: always the same thing, the Wickersham Commission, Katzenbach, Kerner, and Eisenhower. They all said, restrict handguns to bring down crime! Little happened. "It is a kind of Alice in Wonderland," said Kenneth B. Clark (Kerner Commission). "The same moving picture re-shown over and over again. The same analysis, the same recommendations—and the same inaction."

Charles Dickens made notes when he came to America in 1842. His characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* go to Cairo, Illinois, and make the acquaintance of one Hannibal Chollop who, they discover, usually carries "a brace of revolving pistols in his coat pocket." When they express dismay a fellow American comes to Chollop's defense: how strange and singular, he exclaims, is "the settled opposition to our institutions which pervades the British mind." Chuzzlewit retorts, "Are pistols and such things Institutions on which you pride yourselves? Are bloody duels, brutal combats, savage assaults, shootings down, and stabbing in the streets your Institutions?"

A century or so later Mr. Anderson figures there are 200 million civilian-owned guns in America, including 60 million handguns. About a quarter million were assembled from imported parts in the late 1960s, when a new handgun was sold in America every 24 seconds. "Today, the demand has doubled: two are sold every 24 seconds."

Congress has treated the matter gingerly. In 1934 it passed the National Firearms Act to curb shotguns and sub-machine guns, and in 1938 enacted the Federal Firearms Act with mild restrictions on guns dealers. Thirty years lat-

nals use guns, and locking them up and throwing away the key is the best gun-control law we could ever have." (Applause.)

By the standards of other nations the murder rate in America is incredible. In some states handguns are as easy to buy as fishing rods. Police have taken to wearing bulletproof vests to protest them on dangerous assignments. Gun procurers are active, too; they have invented armor-piercing bullets (sometimes known as "cop killers"), which are sold to the underworld. According to Anderson these new bullets can penetrate the equivalent of four vests lined with 72 layers of bullet-resistant material! Police organizations call them barbaric. Congress has two current bills to control sales, but the head of New York's Police Federation says he can't muster support for appeals to the NRA and the Reagan administration.

Mr. Reagan is the first presidential candidate to receive NRA's formal endorsement. What is the mood of the country? Sales of toy guns amount to \$30 million a year. In millions of homes

the family settles down after supper to the comfortable rattle of firearms on TV sets. Researchers told a House committee in 1981 that the average high school graduate has been exposed to 18,000 television murders. The first question put to the Secret Service by John W. Hinckley Jr., after he tried to kill Ronald Reagan was, "Is it on television?" On the streets the homicide rate from firearms is 35 times that of Western Europe's. If the U.S. had Japan's rate only 198 Americans would have been killed in a recent year instead of 10,407.

Acceptance of guns in American life may now be widening. In New York's subway several weeks ago a middle-aged white man shot down four young blacks who allegedly were harassing him. The press tested the reaction of the public to the story: many of those questioned expressed sympathy for the middle-aged man: "It's about time!" they responded. Gun toting may be entering a new phase. Hannibal Chollop would understand.

RICHARD L. STROUT

single night in the weeks immediately following the first Sunday in Lent, Whit Sunday, Holy Cross Day (September 15), and St. Lucy's Day (December 13). The *benandanti* believed that on those nights they sallied forth, in spirit, to fight witches in a pitched battle. It was not a very fierce battle—the *benandanti* were armed only with bunches of fennel, the witches with sorghum stalks—but the issue involved was serious enough. If the *benandanti* won, the crops would be abundant; if victory

UNWICKED WITCHES

The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

by Carlo Ginzburg

translated by John and Anne Tedeschi

(Johns Hopkins University Press, 209 pp., \$18.50)

When this book first appeared in Italian under the title *I Benandanti* it was hailed for throwing new light both on peasant mentality in the early modern period and on the nature of European witchcraft. That was a long time ago—*I Benandanti* was published in 1966. Since then the popular culture of the 16th and 17th centuries has been explored on a massive scale, and research on European witchcraft and witch-hunting has also been abundant. How does Ginzburg's book look now? Re-reading it in this very competent English translation, I find what Ginzburg discovered about the beliefs and practices of certain Italian peasants as exciting and thought-provoking today as it was all those years ago. On the other hand, I still

can't see that the book throws any light at all on the nature of European witchcraft.

By patient research into the records of the Inquisition, Ginzburg has established that between the late 16th and the mid-17th century there lived in the district of Friuli, in the extreme northeast of Italy, certain peasants who called themselves "*benandanti*," or "good walkers." A *benandante* was always a person who had been born wrapped in the amniotic membrane, or caul; a circumstance which (as in many other societies) was believed to bestow supernatural powers. In the case of the *benandanti* those powers manifested themselves chiefly during the Ember Days of the year—to be precise, on a

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went to the witches, they would bring famine on the land.

The *benandanti* were believed, and believed themselves, to possess other powers as well. It was thought that witches on the way home from their nocturnal gatherings were apt to break into wine cellars and, after helping themselves to wine, spoil the rest by urinating into it or throwing filth into the casks. It was the task of the *benandanti* to thwart them in this vexatious activity. Again, if witches had sucked a child's blood so that it was on the point of death, the *benandanti* could always save it if they arrived in time. All this they did while asleep: while a *benandante's* body lay motionless, wrapt in slumber, his or her spirit would go wandering, intent on frustrating witches in all their doings. On the other hand, nobody doubted the reality of these struggles—the *benandante's* spirit, temporarily sundered from the body, was imagined as itself material, tangible.

The status of *benandante* was not something to which one aspired but something that was thrust upon one, and which was often felt as a burden. Once a man or woman born with a caul had reached maturity, it was only a matter of time before he or she would receive a summons in a dream. An angel, or else an older *benandante*—who might be a real person, known to the dreamer, but was just as likely to be a figure of fantasy, imagined as living in some distant place—would call the dreamer to join in the perennial struggle against the witches. And that call could not be resisted: from then on, the new *benandante* was fated to take part, at regular intervals, in night battles against the witches.

IN THE late 16th century and the first half of the 17th, official witch-hunting was at its height. That was the time when, over vast areas of Western Europe, ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike were obsessed by fear of demonic witchcraft. They were convinced that great numbers of people—mostly but not exclusively women—were meeting clandestinely, at night, to adore the devil in person, to perpetrate every kind of blasphemy and sacrilege, and to indulge in promiscuous orgies. This notion of a witches' sabbath was new—during the thousand-year span we call the Middle Ages nobody had thought of witchcraft that way—and

once it became implanted in the minds of the elite it produced a suspiciousness, a nervous vigilance, which were also new. In Friuli the task of tracking down devil-worshipping witches was entrusted to the Inquisition; and it was only to be expected that from time to time a *benandante* would find himself being questioned by an inquisitor about his nocturnal experiences. What transpired during those interrogations was faithfully recorded. Ginzburg is to be congratulated on the skill with which he has extracted, from such an unlikely source, such a coherent account of an otherwise unknown set of peasant beliefs.

Ginzburg also tries to show that the inquisitors directed their interrogations toward proving that the *benandanti* were simply witches; and that, after generations of steady effort, they succeeded in convincing the *benandanti* themselves. It does not seem to me that there is any solid evidence of such a process. Naturally enough, the first thought of an inquisitor, confronted with unfamiliar tales of night battles, was to try to interpret them in terms of the all-too-familiar tales of witches' sabbaths. But in the various Friulian cases described, the inquisitors were clearly unable to convince even themselves. As Ginzburg observes, "the basic indifference of the inquisitors is obvious from the way these investigations were lazily protracted over the years. And it is symptomatic that in the span of almost half a century . . . no trial against a *benandante* was brought to a conclusion"—save only one, and even that ended with a few days' imprisonment and a public recantation. This at a time when other people were being burned alive by the hundreds on charges of attending the witches' sabbath! And as for the *benandanti's* view of themselves—in the couple of late cases where a *benandante* did confess to being a witch and attending the sabbath, Ginzburg himself wonders whether the confessions were not dictated by fear of torture. Certainly the Holy Office in Rome refused to take them at their face value. So may we: there are really no good grounds for doubting that at all times a *benandante* knew himself or herself to be no witch but the very opposite: a "Good walker."

This is minor criticism, not weighty at all when set against the vividness with which Ginzburg portrays the relationship between inquisitors and

benandanti. The gulf which divided popular culture from the culture of the educated elite, the incomprehension with which a cleric, his mind steeped in the new demonology, approached the mental world of the peasantry—all this is evoked most persuasively. The most serious defect of *The Night Battles* lies elsewhere.

"Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults": this phrase, which figures in the book's subtitle, fairly indicates its central thesis. Ginzburg is convinced, and tries hard to convince his readers, that the *benandanti* constituted an organized sect and that their practices constituted a fertility cult. What is more, he suggests that it was fertility cults such as this, misinterpreted by the inquisitors, which gave rise to the belief in demonic witchcraft. In all this he follows a tradition that goes back to Margaret Murray's *Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. In my view, it has led him badly astray.

FERTILITY cults do of course exist, but the rites they involve—such as ritual dancing—are performed physically and publicly. The object of those rites is to solicit and placate supernatural powers imagined to be responsible for the changes in the seasons, for the rising and setting of the sun, for rainfall and other factors conducive to the fertility of vegetation and of animals. That is not something one can take part in by lying in bed and dreaming. Nor can it even be said that the dreams of the *benandanti* were always concerned with fertility. Though in some of their dreams *benandanti* fought witches who were intent on destroying the crops, in others they rescued children who were being inwardly devoured by witches, or else they prevented witches from urinating into wine: not notably "agrarian" occupations at all.

There is a context within which all the experiences of the *benandanti* make perfectly good sense. Quite independently of the educated elite and its newfangled demonology, there existed among European peasants an age-old belief in purely destructive, antisocial witchcraft. The dream-activities of the *benandanti* were directed against that kind of witchcraft. Only because witches were supposed often to attack crops and cattle could those defensive activities be mistaken for a fertility cult. Anti-witchcraft cults and fertility cults are in fact very different things; and if only Ginzburg had come across the

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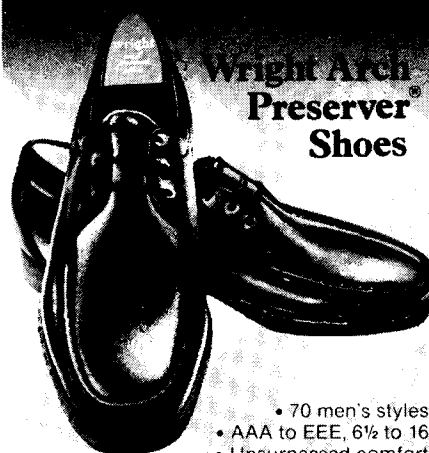
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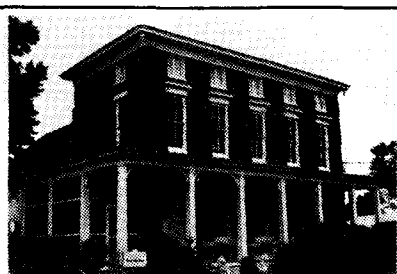
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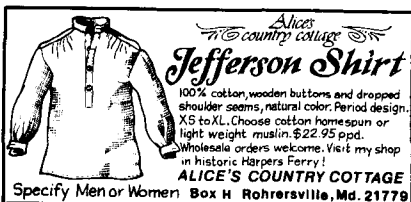


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writings of anthropologists who have studied anti-witchcraft cults in present-day Africa, he would surely have recognized the difference.

Then there is the matter of standardized, culturally determined dream-experiences. Ginzburg does indeed recognize that such experiences are not confined to the *benandanti*; he has even devoted a chapter to describing some other medieval examples. But these examples are not the most relevant he could have found. For instance, there exists irrefutable evidence that some women have regularly felt themselves to leave their bodies at night, to fly abroad, and to kill and devour people. This evidence comes not only from modern Africa but also from medieval Europe, many centuries before official witch-hunting began. By looking further into the records of spontaneous statements of this kind, made without any kind of duress, Ginzburg might have come to see traditional, popular witchcraft in a different light. He might also have come to recognize in the beliefs and experiences of the *benandanti*

the mirror-image of beliefs and experiences current among peasants who thought of themselves as witches.

In my view, then, Ginzburg has partially misinterpreted his materials. Nonetheless, I'm as sure now as I was when it first appeared that this book is a most original and imaginative work and a major scholarly achievement.

NORMAN COHN

Norman Cohn is the author of *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford University Press), among other books.

TRB, from page 4

on a collision course with itself."

What this saga of judicial folly makes clear is that abortion just doesn't belong in the Constitution. There are no neutral principles that can be applied, or "bright lines" that can be adhered to. There is only the tragic trade-off between society's understandable desire to protect human life and a woman's

understandable desire to control her own body and life. The absolutist claim of the right-to-lifers is superficially more plausible than that of the pro-choicers, but only superficially. Unless you are prepared to protect the fetus from the moment of conception against all claims of the mother—even her own right to life (because the law does not permit you to take an innocent person's life, even to protect your own)—you are back to the tragic trade-off.

The decision about where on the spectrum of weighty and trivial reasons for an abortion, and when in the growth of the fetus, that trade-off should occur cannot be made by reference to eternal values. It must be made through social consensus, so that a particular society at a particular time can live with it. In other words, it ought to be made democratically. In thinking about the trade-off, I am not overly impressed by the recent spate of grotesque demonstrations that ever-younger fetuses can smile or wave their limbs. So can dogs. Until you prove to me that a three-month fetus has a greater sense of itself than, say, a cow, I am going to continue thinking that the best solution to this impossible problem is to leave it in most circumstances to the woman who's got to live with the result.

Polls show that most people favor legal abortion. This majority isn't as politicized as the anti-abortion minority, but that might change if the Supreme Court overturns or eviscerates *Roe*. Within five years of such a ruling, I predict, legal abortion would be widely available again—just as it was getting to be widely available before the court swept politics aside. What's more, the campaign for abortion could become the cornerstone of a liberal revival based on the issue of personal freedom.

The greatest danger is a future Supreme Court ruling that legal abortion not only is not required by the Constitution, but actually is forbidden as a denial of due process to the fetal "person." Many conservatives would cheer. This certainly would not be an example of "strict construction" based on the "intent of the founders," since abortion was widely legal when the Bill of Rights was written. But abortion is another area of the law where conservatives are discovering the joys of "judicial activism," and liberals may soon discover the virtues of "judicial restraint." If it happens, that will be *Roe v. Wade*'s worst legacy of all.

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR has recently reviewed and recommends.

The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers by T. J. Clark (Knopf). An original study of a decisive turning point in the history of art. (Reviewed 2/18/85)

The Intellectual Follies: A Memoir of the Literary Venture in New York and Paris by Lionel Abel (Norton). The life and times of the literary-political-Jewish intellectuals from 1930 onward. (2/11/85)

For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America by Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski (The Free Press). A superb single-volume survey of American military policy. (2/11/85)

Willowbrook Wars: A Decade of Struggle for Social Justice by David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman (Harper & Row). A chronicle of the political and legal skirmishes surrounding one case at the heart of the de-institutionalization controversy. (2/4/85)

White Noise by Don DeLillo (Viking). A novel of fear and trembling

and technology in Middle America. (2/4/85)

Equal Distance by Brad Leithauser (Knopf). An accomplished first novel about young Americans in Japan. (1/21/85)

German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler by Henry Ashby Turner Jr. (Oxford University Press). A surprising study of how little the Nazis owed to the capitalists. (1/21/85)

The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity by Michael J. Piore and Charles Sabel (Basic). An original and illuminating account of a turning point in our industrial economy. (1/7&14/85)

The Burn by Vassily Aksyonov (Random House). An epic portrait of the surreal and, alas, so real, landscape of Soviet life. (12/31/84)

Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence by Warren F. Kimball (Princeton University Press). World War II, as witnessed and waged by two great leaders and good friends. (12/24/84)

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Cutting It Close

THIS MAGAZINE'S EDITOR has declared war on the tendency of many writers to impose a false unity on their "Diarist" offerings. The purpose of this page, he argues, is to allow the author to share an unrelated, *random* sampling of his recent thoughts. I support him completely in this maverick and entropic campaign; I'm just sorry that most of my recent thoughts have been about men's facial hair. And that the rest were about television.

FANS OF THE OLD Yasir Arafat Perpetual Five-Day Beard Look (which is now "out") will be glad to hear that 1985 has been declared The Year of the Perpetual Two-Day Beard Look. According to an article in *USA Today*, "The weekend beard isn't just for weekends anymore. Stars are sporting full-time stubble: Bruce Springsteen, Timothy Hutton, Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Don Johnson of 'Miami Vice.'" The stars are not alone. While traveling last fall, I noticed that the two-day beard is also very popular with highway road crews and everyone in the town of Ft. Stockton, Texas. The look apparently gives a fellow that invaluable image of "rugged vulnerability" that Mel Gibson is currently schlockurizing in *The River*. Camille Duhe, the "grooming editor" at *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, says the underlying message of the "rub-and-scratch-and-have-another-beer-in-your-undershirt" two-day beard is this: "Everybody wants to look rugged. It suggests you don't have to go in to an office job. You can call your own shots." Hey, I want to be like all of the above. But how is it possible to maintain a perpetual stubble? This is the question that has puzzled Arafat-watchers for years. Lacquering your stubble would probably work, but might have bad long-term effects on your skin tone. The aforementioned Camille Duhe advises two-day hopefuls to use an electric razor or to "shave just once in a downward stroke" before going to bed. "By morning you've got a regrowth going." Thank you.

TALK ABOUT HAIRY. Just imagine being one of the photographers who tried to

photograph Prince after the American Music Awards last month. As everyone knows, they were both roughed up by Prince's 300-pound bodyguard. This bodyguard is bad news—the embodiment of every American male's nightmare vision of that huge ninth grader who rocketed dodge balls at our heads in junior-high gym class. Little is known of the early years of the reclusive, ruggedly vulnerable Prince, but one thing is clear from his photographs: he never shaved off what, at my junior high, was known as "The Post-Pubescent Peach Phuzz Mustache" (PPPPHZM). This repulsive look was achieved when a lad of 13 or 14 got his first sprouting of extremely fine hair over his lip and, convinced it would "grow out" into a full-fledged mustache, refused to shave it. (Eight curly strands of "Maynard G. Krebs" chin beard were optional, but preferred.) Prince has managed to preserve his PPPPHZM all these years, but it has been, and remains, a constant battle. According to a recent unauthorized biography of Prince, the cherished PPPPHZM, and not "pushy photographers," is the real reason for the jumbo bodyguard. To this day Prince is regularly terrorized by repeated assaults on his mustache at the hands of cranky, retired, razor-wielding junior-high gym coaches.

IDEA FOR SALE to Ellen Goodman: There may be a useful metaphor for changing 1980s societal values in the recent decision by Joyce Davenport—the brassy, sexy, tough-but-compassionate lady public defender on "Hill Street Blues"—to switch sides and become a tough and sexy prosecutor. You know, symbolizing our rightward shift, the Supreme Court's decisions eroding criminal rights . . . that sort of thing. For me the change was notable on a different and potentially more important level. As I watched Joyce move closer and closer to making her big decision, I began to hope—now that she and Frank are on the same side, as it were—that this could mean the end of those dramatic, steamy, end-of-the-show bedroom debates on how the meaning of justice is fouled by the rancorous va-

pors rising from the violent miasma of The Streets. Nope. They still talk about it, but now they both say the same thing.

I RECENTLY INTERVIEWED a political science professor who lamented that today's college youth don't seem interested in "the Kennedy myth." I think I know why. Someone probably made them watch a Kennedy mini-series. Last month I sat through the entirety of the latest entry in this crowded field, "Robert F. Kennedy and His Times." As usual, there were plenty of crazy omissions and inaccuracies. (There was, for example, no mention of the Bay of Pigs, and RFK was portrayed as having been "deeply troubled" from the start about the idea of working for Joe McCarthy.) Also as usual, LBJ was played as a cross between Mephistopheles and Jubilation T. Cornpone. But the Kennedy brothers are the worst. RFK is always a feisty, tough-but-Good short guy who often acknowledges his reputation for "woothlessness" as he battles the evil tag-team of LBJ and J. Edgar Hoover. You also get the idea that RFK must have really been the one in control, because the actors who have played JFK have created an official television Kennedy who is essentially Jimmy Carter The First—a boring, bumbling wimp who doesn't do anything but say things like, "Ah, Bobby, dad is worried about how your crusade against the Teamsters could affect me, ah, politically." In one typical scene in "RFK," the entire clan is playing celebratory touch football just after Kennedy has been elected president. Jack makes a "good catch" but sulks because there is no reaction from Jackie. Bobby, the ruthless enforcer, trots over to throw his weight around. "It, ah, willy wuz a good catch, Jackie, and, ah, I think you ought to go tell him." She does, he takes his index finger out of his mouth, stops pouting, and together they walk off into history.

ALEX HEARD

Alex Heard is a clean-shaven Washington writer.



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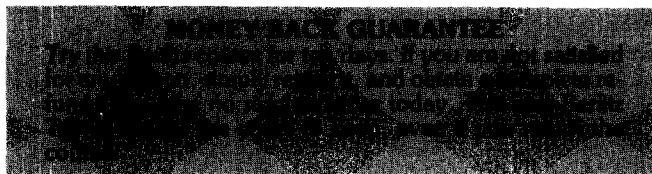
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